

Worshippers witness to church robbery

led

Sheep called in battle kudu

Football players find scheduling problem

sts

Normal conditions not met

King attends military ceremony

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, on Wednesday attended a special ceremony held at the headquarters of Al Hussein Ben Ali Brigade to inaugurate the Sharif Hussein Ben Ali Museum. King Abdullah, who was received upon arrival at the brigade's headquarters by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh and senior army officers, honoured the officers and institutions contributing to the establishment of the museum. The ceremony was attended by HRH Prince Faisal, HRH Princess Aisha, HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Prince Zeid Ben Shaker and senior civil and military officials.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Appeal delays closure of Palestinian offices in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — An appeal to Israel's Supreme Court stopped Israeli authorities at the last minute from closing two Palestinian offices in Arab east Jerusalem Wednesday night, a police spokesman said. The court will issue its decision Thursday on the appeal filed by Palestinian authorities, the spokesman said. Earlier, the spokesman told AFP that the offices of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's advisor for Christian affairs, Ibrahim Qandalaft, and a centre run by a prisoners support group, were being closed on Wednesday night. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered Monday the shutting down of the two offices plus those of the Palestinian news agency WAFA in Arab east Jerusalem. But for the time being, WAFA was removed from the closure list.

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NATO redoubles raids; Cypriot envoy to seek release of captured U.S. soldiers

Pristina bombing kills 12; U.S. links Serb officers to 'war crimes'

Agencies

NATO SAID on Wednesday it had launched its heaviest raids yet on Serb positions and would continue the onslaught in a bid to stem a refugee exodus that threatens to overwhelm neighbouring countries.

The U.N. refugee agency was still trying on Wednesday night to establish the fate of around 30,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Serbia's shattered Kosovo province who were missing from Macedonia (see separate story).

Earlier on Wednesday, NATO said it had launched its heaviest air raids yet, underlining its rejection of Yugoslavia's ceasefire declaration on Tuesday.

Military spokesman Air Commodore David Wilby told a Brussels news conference that Alliance aircraft had hit an armoured column in south-western Kosovo on Tuesday in their "first major breakthrough" against Yugoslav ground forces.

Putting the Yugoslav war machine "on notice" Wednesday, James Rubin, the U.S. State Department spokesman, said nine Serb commanders have been identified, linked to atrocities in Kosovo, and could face war crime prosecutions before the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague.

Air strikes deep into Yugoslavia continued overnight, hitting dozens of military targets and what NATO called "fielded forces in and around Kosovo" with "surgical precision." All NATO aircraft returned safely from their air strikes, Wilby said.

Cypriot President Spyros Kyprianou was reported to be heading for Belgrade on Thursday to seek the release of three U.S. soldiers seized by Serbian troops near the Macedonian border a week ago.

Kyprianou said earlier that he hoped to return with the U.S. soldiers provided some Serbian conditions were met.

However, a Greek cabinet minister who said the Cypriot leader would fly to Belgrade on



A woman climbs a hill after receiving blankets at a NATO-run refugee camp near Skopje's Stenkovac sports aviation airport on Wednesday. Following NATO air strikes, Serb forces expelled tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians from the Kosovo province, creating the greatest migration of refugees in Europe since World War II (AP photo)

Queen to head relief mission to Macedonia

By Caroline Farraj

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Rania on Thursday will head to Macedonia to deliver relief supplies to the victims of the reported ethnic cleansing campaign by Serb forces, an official said on Wednesday.

"The Queen is expected to

Thursday added that if the Serbs insisted on a halt to NATO raids, the mission would fail.

"If the precondition includes a halt to NATO bombings then this mission will return empty-handed," the minister, who requested anonymity, told Reuters. "At this point Mr.

head an official delegation to present relief supplies gathered by the Hashemite Charity Organisation for the Kosovo crisis victims in implementation of His Majesty King Abdullah's directives," the source told the Jordan Times on condition of anonymity.

He said the supplies are

Kyprianou has not heard of any such condition from Belgrade."

U.S. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger said in Washington he could not confirm the soldiers would be released soon but said Washington would welcome their freedom. A Yugoslav foreign ministry spokesman inter-

being donated by private and public organisations, including pharmaceutical firms.

Earlier this week, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadid announced that a shipment of relief supplies was being prepared. He said it would include tents, medical equipment, medicine and food.

viewed by CNN declined comment.

Russia, a traditional ally of Serbia, stepped up its search for a diplomatic solution, with President Boris Yeltsin urging world leaders not to reject Belgrade's latest unilateral proposals for Kosovo out of hand.

The Kremlin said a Yeltsin

The government on April 1 issued a statement condemning the aggression against the people of Kosovo, and called for an immediate halt to their suffering.

Queen Rania's visit to Macedonia will be her first official international trip abroad since she was proclaimed Queen on March 21.

letter to the leaders of the Group of Seven — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — had spelled out Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's ideas and asked them to be constructive.

(Continued on page 2)

Jordan to seek stronger ties with Gulf states — King

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday said Jordan will remain in contact and seek to further bolster the Kingdom's relations with Arab Gulf states.

King Abdullah, speaking to Jordan Television following his return from Saudi Arabia after a three-day official visit, said his talks with King Fahd and senior Saudi officials focused on further bolstering bilateral ties and increasing cooperation in various fields.

"I also wanted to thank them for their steadfast support for Jordan. We had very fruitful discussion on future cooperation, and I hope to see the strengthening of relations in the future," the King said.

"I expressed the appreciation

and gratitude of Jordan's leadership, government and people for Saudi Arabia's support at the time of the passing away of the late King Hussein," added King Abdullah.

Asked to comment on news reports that Jordan sought to join the Gulf Cooperation Council, the King said: "I don't know where that came from. I think we just need to leave that to idle gossip at this stage."

In addition to King Fahd, King Abdullah held talks with Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz on bilateral relations and means of restoring Arab solidarity.

King Abdullah, who together with an accompanying delegation, performed the lesser pilgrimage (Umra) at Mecca

and met with a number of Saudi princes and senior officials.

Upon his departure from Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah sent a cable to King Fahd voicing his deep appreciation for Saudi Arabia's support for Jordan and the hospitality accorded to the Jordanian delegation.

In the cable, King Abdullah said the visit offered him the opportunity to consult with the Saudi leadership over issues of common concern.

King Abdullah sent another cable to Crown Prince Abdullah voicing his appreciation for Saudi Arabia's constant support for Jordan. He also extended an invitation to Prince Abdullah to visit Jordan.

House ends second day of debate on government's policy statement

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Parliament on Wednesday wrapped up its second day of debate on the government's policy statement during a session which witnessed heated moments between lawmakers.

Deputy Salameh Hiyari surprised MPs by calling on His Majesty King Abdullah to dissolve the Lower House as a necessary step to start a "new era" and bring a strong Parliament to tackle laws requiring amendments, saying that such a move would form the "cornerstone for the comprehensive review of our life."

Hiyari told his fellow deputies that without such a move there would be no development and "what will remain is a band of hypocrites and influential people who are robbing the country."

The lawmaker, who was fiercely critical of a former government during last summer's water crisis, was expected to withhold confidence in the government of Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh.

Hiyari cited several areas

and laws as requiring legislative review, including the judiciary, the Audit Bureau, the Press and Publications Law and the Elections Law.

He said a new parliament would be able to discuss these issues "away from the pressures of other agencies in the country."

The deputy's comment met with sharp criticism from fellow lawmaker Abdul Karim Dughmi, who said that it was "illegal to demand [the dissolution of Parliament] because according to the Constitution, the King is above the law."

Dughmi added that Hiyari had no right to request such a measure on behalf of Parliament members.

On Tuesday, deputies began their debate of the government's policy statement. In the statement, submitted to the House on Saturday, Rawabdeh pledged to launch political, economic, social and other reforms.

The deputies are expected to hold the vote of confidence on Thursday.

Taking his turn, Deputy Hashim Waqid urged the government to help in lifting the

U.N. sanctions against Iraq and to end what he described as the "tragedy of the Iraqi people."

Deputy Abdul Majeed Aqlash, speaking during his turn, criticised what he claimed were discriminatory policies towards Palestinians in Jordan.

Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali interjected to say that such statements were unacceptable and would be stricken from the House record.

Later in the session, Abdul Razak Theishat asked for a motion to speak in order to read a joint statement by around 10 deputies addressing the comments of Aqlash.

Such statements, Theishat said, were damaging to national unity, and he and his colleagues rejected them outright.

Rawabdeh is expected to deliver his rebuttal to the House on Thursday. This is to be followed by a roll call for a vote in favour or against confidence. Analysts have predicted Rawabdeh will win the vote by a significant margin, 60 to 65 out of a maximum 80.

Confusion over missing 30,000 refugees

SKOPJE (R) — Chaos, confusion and mystery surrounded the fate of thousands of Kosovo refugees on Wednesday night, with the U.N. refugee agency saying around 30,000 were unaccounted for along the Macedonian border with Serbia.

The United States told an increasingly desperate Macedonia that it had to adhere to international standards in dealing with ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing Kosovo.

Yugoslavia on Wednesday closed the main crossings from Kosovo into Macedonia and Albania, abruptly halting the refugee flow.

At Jazinc on the Macedonian border, Reuters reporters saw Yugoslav police turning cars full of refugees around and sending them back into Kosovo. Albania's Morina border post, through which an estimated 280,000 refugees have fled in the past two weeks, was deserted.

Chaos and confusion reigned as refugee officials tried to come to grips with the human catastrophe.

NATO said 912,000 ethnic Albanians had been displaced from their homes in Kosovo in the past year. The United Nations said on Wednesday more than 430,000 had fled or been expelled from Kosovo since NATO started its air attacks on Yugoslavia on March 24.

Macedonia, lying to the south of Kosovo, abruptly cleared about 40,000 refugees out of the

notorious Blace no man's land some 30 km north of the capital, Skopje, into transit camps or onto buses to Albania.

Only piles of garbage and human excrement remained in a field stretching between Macedonia and Yugoslavia where refugees had subsisted in squalor and degradation.

In Geneva, spokesman Paul Stromberg for the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said there had been no firm figures for refugees stranded in the Blace area.

Asked if the total of those still unaccounted for was around 30,000, he said: "Yes."

Macedonian officials had placed severe restrictions on the access aid agencies could gain to the site. When they were allowed in, the priority was to provide food and medicines.

"Our last priority was registration," Stromberg said.

He said rough estimates put the number of refugees who had been there at 60,000. More than 16,000 appeared to have gone to a transit camp and up to 10,000 had been bussed to southern Albania.

This left around 30,000 unaccounted for.

Macedonian Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Kiprijanova told a news conference on Wednesday 119 buses had taken 9,500 people to Albania overnight. She said she expected several thousand to be airlifted to Germany.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman James

Rubin said the United States understood the burden Macedonia faced from the massive refugee flows.

But he said: "We have sent a strong message to the government of Macedonia that we will hold it to the highest standards of humanitarian law and expect it to uphold internationally accepted laws in the treatment of refugees and evacuation procedures."

In Tirana, spokesman Andrea Angeli for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said at least 14,000 Kosovo Albanians arrived in southeastern Albania on Wednesday.

"They are all from Blace and more are coming," Angeli said.

The UNHCR said in a statement in Geneva many of the refugees had been moved against their will, adding "some refugees complain not only that they didn't know where they were going but were also being split up from the rest of their families."

"We still don't know how many people went where," a UNHCR spokeswoman said. "It will be very difficult for us to reunite these families if they're being taken to unknown destinations."

Western governments say they understand the concerns of the Macedonian government, which faces considerable pro-Serb sentiment from its Slav majority and fears the influx of ethnic Albanians will swell its 20 per cent Albanian minority out of proportion.

Arafat faces Japanese pressure not to declare state

Mubarak advises Palestinians to delay statehood for 6 months

Agencies

JAPAN ON Wednesday urged visiting Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to postpone his plan to declare an independent Palestinian state next month, a foreign ministry official said.

Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura made the request during a two-hour meeting with the Palestinian president, who arrived earlier Wednesday on a two-day visit to discuss Middle East peace moves, the official said.

Arafat told Komura he planned to convene the central committee of his autonomous government towards the end of

this month to draw a "final conclusion" on the question of an independence declaration, the official said.

The Palestinian president was due to meet Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi on Thursday before flying on to China to continue his tour, which has already taken him to Turkey, Jordan and Russia.

Meanwhile, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has called for the first time for a delay of up to six months in the declaration of a Palestinian state, the government press in Cairo reported Wednesday.

"President Arafat is examining this issue and we hope that

the Palestinians will delay by five to six months" their declaration of statehood, Mubarak told Chinese television, according to Cairo press reports.

"The Palestinians are examining a delay but they need guarantees from the international community to ensure that it will recognise a Palestinian state even after a delay of three, four, five or six months," he said.

Arafat's trip is part of his effort to gauge international opinion on whether he should proclaim an independent state on May 4 — when an interim period of autonomy under the 1993 Oslo accords expires.

He has repeatedly said he will

declare a state on that date but has come under pressure from the international community, including the United States and Russia, to postpone a declaration at least until after Israeli elections on May 17.

Komura reiterated his support for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. He underlined Japan's commitment to offer economic aid to encourage Palestinians to stick to the peace process with Israel, the official said.

But he called a unilateral declaration of independence "undesirable" for efforts to "maintain the principles of the existing peace process," the official said.

Arafat insisted that there were calls among the Palestinians for such a declaration and said it would be possible for Palestine and Israel to co-exist as two states.

Japan has pledged \$200 million as part of a \$3 billion aid package arranged by donor nations after Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu concluded a U.S.-brokered accord late last year to restart the peace process.

Japan also offered 1.68 billion yen (\$14 million) aid last month to help Palestinian refugees and fund construction work.

Tensions remain high in Nazareth after firebombings

NAZARETH (AFP) — Tensions remained high in Nazareth for the fourth day running Wednesday after Christian-owned businesses came under attack from petrol bombs thrown by Muslim youths, and churches stayed closed in protest at the ongoing clashes.

"The Christians of Nazareth are afraid. The closure of churches is a way of telling Christians all over the world what is happening," a Christian official told AFP.

In the latest violence, a shop owned by a Christian and a car was damaged overnight and police said they found a number of petrol bombs ready for use when they broke up several groups of young Muslim demonstrators.

"The Israeli police has not played its

role, it did not intervene to put an end of acts of vandalism," added the official, who declined to be named.

On Sunday, the worst day of the clashes, 27 people were wounded, including four police officers, and 11 people were arrested in Nazareth, the leading Arab town in Israel with some 60,000 residents, 30 per cent of them Christian.

In response, the leaders of the main Christian denominations in the Holy Land on Monday ordered a two-day closure of all churches in the town.

"We cannot continue to receive pilgrims if we cannot ensure the safety of local Christians," said the official.

The two communities are at loggerheads over Muslim plans to build a mosque near the Christian Church of the

Annunciation which many Christians believe marks the site where the Archangel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary she would give birth to Jesus.

The dispute, which has sparked a stabbing, beatings, and a campaign of hate mail, has heightened as the Israeli authorities have been promoting Nazareth as the centrepiece of the Millennium celebrations due to get under way in nine months' time.

For more than a year, the Muslims have had a huge tent erected over the square and used it as a temporary mosque, close to the tomb of a local Muslim saint, Shihab Al Din.

Nazareth's Christian mayor, Ramiz Jeraisi, wants to create a square on the site. The city faces heavy congestion,

caused in part by the daily visits of thousands of Christian pilgrims to the town.

"We are not opposed to the construction of a mosque, but why build it right next to the church?" the official asked.

The Muslims say the land in question belongs to the Waqf, the body that administers Islamic property, while the Christians say it belongs to the Israeli government.

On Monday the so-called Follow-Up Committee, which brings together Arab members of parliament and the mayors of Arab towns, said it had brokered a deal under which planning permission would be sought to build the mosque.

The Muslim side sees this as a victory, although Jeraisi has not yet put his signature to the agreement.

Libya's national airline mulls resumption of international flights

CAIRO (AFP) — National carrier Libyan Arab Airlines (LAA) said on Wednesday it is examining steps to resume international flights after the U.N. suspended a seven-year air embargo on Tripoli.

Technical committees will be set up to examine putting Libyan planes back into service, LAA President Mohammad Abssim told reporters in Cairo, where two of LAA's 12 planes have been parked

since the embargo was imposed in 1992. Abssim arrived in Cairo overnight Tuesday as part of a tour of Arab capitals to discuss "preparations" for LAA's return to international skies, although no date has yet been announced.

The sanctions banned international flights to and from Libya as well as the delivery of planes or spare parts. Domestic flights were permitted.

The sanctions cost LAA

\$3 billion in lost business and its fleet has suffered from inadequate maintenance, the head of the airline's Cairo office, Abdul Latif Ali, told journalists on Monday.

He said 10 planes flew domestic flights in the last seven years.

Flights to Libya were suspended after U.N. sanctions were imposed on Libya in 1992 following Tripoli's refusal to hand over two Libyans sought for the 1988 bombing of a

Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

Libya handed the suspects over Monday, prompting the U.N. to suspend the sanctions.

Egypt's national carrier EgyptAir is meanwhile waiting for a greenlight from the ministry of foreign affairs to resume flying to Libya, company officials said.

Eventually there will be three weekly flights to Tripoli and the eastern

Mediterranean city of Benghazi, the spokesman said, adding that the LAA was expected to reciprocate with three weekly flights to Cairo, he added.

EgyptAir flew a special flight early Wednesday for Arab League Assistant Secretary of State Ahmed Ben Helli and Egyptian Minister of State Mohammad Zaki Abu Amer, who returned home to Cairo after witnessing Libya's handover of the suspects in Tripoli on Monday.

NATO redoubles raids; Cypriot envoy to seek release of U.S. soldiers

(Continued from page 1)

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeyev and its special envoy to the Kosovo peace process, Boris Mayorsky, met German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in Bonn on Wednesday.

The six-nation Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia met for over three hours at the German embassy in Brussels Wednesday to discuss the Kosovo crisis.

"We had good talks on a very tough subject," U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Tal-

bott said without giving details.

It was the first time the senior officials from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States had met on the Kosovo crisis since NATO began air strikes against Yugoslavia on March 24.

European diplomats expressed satisfaction that Russia had amended without insisting on a halt to the NATO strikes first.

However, President Bill Clinton insisted that "nothing less" than full Yugoslav compliance with all NATO demands on Kosovo would

end the air war.

"It is not enough now for Mr. Milosevic to say that his forces will cease fire in a Kosovo denied its freedom and devoid of its people," Clinton said.

"He must withdraw his forces, let the refugees return, permit the deployment of an international security force... Nothing less will bring peace with security to the people of Kosovo."

Defence Secretary William Cohen, in Brussels conferring with allies, said there would be no let-up in air operations, telling a news conference:

"This is no time to pause."

Yugoslav forces on Wednesday laid mines at the main border post between Kosovo and Albania, after closing it earlier in the day preventing refugees crossing, witnesses said.

Serb troops could be seen digging at the frontier post of Morina, where tens of thousands of refugees have in recent days flooded across fleeing alleged Serb atrocities, an AFP photographer at the scene said.

Earlier an AFP correspondent saw heavy digging equipment near the Serb border post at Morina, barely 100 metres across no man's land from the Albanian frontier post.

The Yugoslav army closed the Morina border post at about 3:00 a.m. (0100 GMT) on Wednesday, after closing another crossing point to the north — which was already mined, according to U.N. aid workers — on Tuesday.

In the Kosovo capital Pristina, the first group of foreign correspondents allowed to visit the province since the raids began two weeks ago were told life was an exhausting struggle to survive, marked by boredom and intermittent terror.

The first independent news film from Pristina, shipped to neighbouring Macedonia by Greece's Mega television station, showed scenes of devastation.

Reporters saw that the main telecommunications building in downtown Pristina had been severely damaged by an overnight cruise missile strike. Local officials said at least 12 bodies had been pulled from the rubble.

"There is a risk the toll could be even higher, as not all of the debris has been cleared away," Ivica Mihajlovic, secretary of the Kosovo Information Centre, told journalists brought to Pristina by the Yugoslav army.

An earlier toll Wednesday had put the number of dead at 10.

An AFP reporter at the scene saw the corpses of three men, one of them badly burned, being hauled from the ruins of the central post office in Pristina, which was destroyed early Wednesday.

NATO planes conducted three attacks on Pristina, destroying a large part of the centre of the town. The first raid was at 0:45 a.m. (2345 GMT).

At least 20 projectiles landed on the centre of the town, destroying the post building, the welfare centre and numerous houses, the AFP reporter said.

Other buildings, one of which housed the Serb provincial government of the province and the National Bank offices some 300 metres away, were seriously damaged.

In the Pristina's main street, Vidovdanska, five members of a Turkish refugee family died in a basement of their house, the state agency Tanjug reported.

At least 30 small shops were demolished, while shrapnel and bomb fragments were scattered among the ruins and broken glass in the street, the AFP reporter said.

Meanwhile, leading politicians from the Muslim World joined together Wednesday to condemn the actions of Serbs in Kosovo and to offer their help.

The foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference issued a declaration saying they would contribute to peacekeeping and monitoring operations in Kosovo as well as providing humanitarian aid.

"It is clear that Kosovo must be able to decide its own political future," said Iranian Foreign Minister Karam al-Kharazmi.

"This declaration proves the Islamic World cannot witness these crimes without taking action. It sends a strong message to Serbia that these mortalities have to be stopped."



Egyptian students burn the Serbian flag after scaling the main gate of Cairo University on Wednesday during a demonstration in solidarity with Kosovo's ethnic Muslim Albanians (AFP photo)

Egyptian students stone police at pro-Albanian rally

CAIRO (AFP) — Students threw stones and chairs at a police truck that tried to enter Cairo University on Wednesday to monitor a rally for solidarity with Kosovo's Albanians.

The assailants blocked the truck from entering campus as around 1,000 students were gathering to take part in the rally, AFP correspondents

at the scene said.

Plain-clothes security men grabbed the chairs and used them to show the students away from the gates but they did not hit anyone.

No one was reportedly hurt in the incident, the correspondents said.

On Monday 3,000 students at Cairo University held a three-hour rally to express

solidarity with the Albanians of Kosovo and their indignation at the lack of action in the crisis by Muslim nations.

Some protesters burned the Serbian flag while others chanted slogans slandering Arab inaction and Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic.

Monday's rally was organised by the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

Sudan rebels say government bombed civilians at Easter

NAIROBI (R) — Sudanese rebels accused Khartoum on Wednesday of bombing two small rebel-held towns in the south in the last eight days, killing at least four civilians.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said government aircraft dropped 14 bombs on the town of Yel on Easter Sunday, targeting a Catholic church and a nearby civilian hospital, killing one woman and seriously wounding six people.

"Several others were unaccounted for but presumed to

have been killed," the SPLA said in a statement released in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

On March 30 the government bombed a market in Narus on the east bank of the Nile, killing two children and one old man and wounding two people, the statement said.

The SPLA said neither town had any military significance and accused the government of "a policy of depopulating the south either by wiping out the civilian population or of making civilians flee the south and go into exile"

Yel lies close to the borders with Congo and Uganda and is a frequent target of government bombing raids. Many are aimed at a hospital run by the Norwegian People's Aid Agency, which supports the SPLA.

The SPLA has been fighting Khartoum for more than 15 years for self-determination and religious freedom for south Sudan.

Northern Sudan is mainly Muslim and the south is mainly Christian or animist.



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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

17:30 Football match (Dynamo Kiev vs. Bayern Munich)
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French programme
19:30 News headlines
20:00 Museums Around the World
20:30 Dr. Quin. the Medicine Woman
21:15 Encounter
21:45 Documentary — Milner — Ferwick
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film: "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"

Friday Programmes

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Great Moments in Science and Technology
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Serie — Le Paris
20:30 Star Trek
21:15 BBC Single Documentary
22:00 News in English
22:30 Millennium

PRAYER TIMES

03:53 Fajr
05:12 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:58 Dhuhr
15:12 Asr
18:04 Maghreb
19:23 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terre Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweifheh Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 03/12

Jerash 07/18

Um Qays 07/16

Madaba 05/16

Petra 06/20

Dead Sea 11/25

AMMAN: Dr. Mikhael Mazharah 5150312

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyin 4630115

Dr. Wisam Hazzayin 4748563

Dr. Haidan Hannoun 5153776

AMMAN: Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID: Dr. Lutfi Shalabi (02)241789
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343402

Traffic police 4896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

IRBID: Dr. Lutfi Shalabi (02)241789

Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

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Husseini Medical Centre 5658656

Luzmila 4630195

Khalidi Maternity 4642816

Alekh Maternity 4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362

Malhas, J. Amman 4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071

Shmeisani Hospital 5607431

Jordan Hospital 5607550

University Hospital 5353444

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013

Al-Bashir 4775111/26

Army, Madka 4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 5157100

Amal Hospital 5607155

Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

Jerusalem Hospital 4387181

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AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:45 Sanaa (RJ)

08:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

09:05 Bombay (RJ)

09:30 New Delhi (RJ)

09:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)

09:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

10:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

10:05 Colombo (RJ)

10:35 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

12:05 Beirut (RJ)

16:30 London (RJ)

16:30 Kuwait (RJ)

18:10 Athens (RJ)

18:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

18:45 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)

22:30 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

NAF halts loans pending feasibility study results

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The National Aid Fund has halted loans for income-generating projects until the results of a feasibility study to determine their effectiveness, officials said on Wednesday.

The NAF will conduct the study after gaining approval from the Prime Ministry, said NAF social researcher Abeer Wardat. "Accordingly, the fund will decide to either continue or suspend these loans completely," she told the Jordan Times.

Last year the fund extended loans worth JD2,360,818 to support 949 income-generating projects. In 1998, NAF also granted general loans amounting to JD36,949 for 75 projects. The loan amounts varied from a minimum of JD1,000 to a maximum of JD4,000.

NAF is currently undergoing a series of corrective and remedial measures as part of a three-year executive plan in an effort to upgrade its administrative system. The fund offers large interest-free loans to families,

groups of individuals, and charitable societies to start businesses, provided that the ventures include more than one manager and generate returns equal at least to the monthly amount of cash these groups receive.

Since its establishment in 1986, the NAF has been providing cash subsidies to 250,000 underprivileged Jordanians in 40,000 households.

NAF's assistance also includes disaster alleviation, physical rehabilitation, and vocational training.

Human rights group expresses concern for Kosovars

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Jordan on Wednesday expressed deep concern over the plight of Kosovars who it said "have been uprooted from their homeland and forced to flee in the face of Serbian atrocities."

"The organisation is deeply concerned about the human tragedy of the Albanians of Kosovo at the hands of the Yugoslav authorities who have committed atrocities, burnt homes, terrorised local inhabitants including senior citizens and children, and forced people to flee their homes," said an organisation statement.

"It is regrettable that NATO intervention and the attacks on Serbian positions designed to impose hegemony on the Balkan region and intimidate certain European nations have prompted the Serbs to intensify their aggression and drive the people of Kosovo away from their homes," added the statement.

The statement voiced the organisation's

condemnation of "these criminal and brutal attacks which are directed against the innocent people and which violate human rights and international conventions and treaties."

"The organisation draws the attention of the U.N. and other international organisations and human rights groups to the grave situation in Kosovo and calls for a worldwide campaign to halt the aggression and for holding accountable those responsible for the crimes and referring them to the International Criminal Court to be tried as war criminals responsible for genocide," the statement demanded.

The organisation also demanded that Kosovo refugees be supplied with relief supplies, food and medical aid and appropriate shelter until they can be repatriated and accorded their right to self-determination in accordance with U.N. principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

U.S. computer show highlights urgency of enacting IPR laws

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — A two-day exhibition of U.S. computer and information technology has underlined the dire need for Jordan to press ahead with updating laws on intellectual property rights (IPR) to attract more foreign investment.

Thirty-eight Jordanian dealers and distributors of American computer firms are participating in the American embassy's 7th Annual Computer Show, which opened to the public on Wednesday.

Ironically, one of the participating companies in the two-day exhibition is a local agency of a U.S. computer firm which sells pirate software copies alongside original ones.

"The protection of intellectual property is an important element in any emerging market," James Soriano, economic councillor at the U.S. embassy, told journalists on the sidelines of the show.

"Countries that do have rigorous legal systems to protect intellectual property sort of get an international stamp of approval designating this emerging market as a good one for investment. It attracts foreign investment," he added.

Jordan's failure to modernise IPR laws is hindering its access to the Geneva-based World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The government, in the process of making its trademark and patent

laws consistent with WTO agreements on intellectual property rights, expects Jordan to join the organisation by the year 2000.

"The piracy problem in Jordan is a dual one," said a local computer expert. "First, when you buy a computer, they give you 500 megabytes of software on it for free. Secondly, the customers themselves buy piracy software."

"An original package of a certain programme would cost around US\$2,000 in the U.S. But the same pirate copy in Jordan would cost around JD30," he told the Jordan Times.

"Awareness is required. All the companies sell copies and originals."

Several local lawyers, including one representing U.S. computer giant Microsoft, have recently sent letters to every computer and IT dealer in Jordan requesting that they not "preload" software free of charge on hard discs, business experts said.

Companies at the show are exhibiting dozens of the latest IT hardware and software from among the world's fastest growing industries.

"I think it is a great opportunity to show the best of American technology and to strengthen the business and trade relationship between Jordan and the U.S.," said U.S. ambassador to Jordan, William Burns.

"Jordan, with its very well edu-

cated and skilled population and position in the region is well placed to take part in that growth [of computer and information technologies market]," he said.

"That is why I am really encouraged by the commitment of the Jordanian government to improve the investment climate here, and I promise that the U.S. is going to do everything it can to help achieve that and to encourage American companies to do business here," Burns added.

Last year's show hosted 26 companies.

The AMIR Programme (Access to Micro Finance and Improved Implementation of Policy Reform which is funded by the U.S. Aid for the International Development) and the Jordanian Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights will present a seminar on copyright enforcement, including an overview of the Jordanian Copyright Law.

Experts from several computer companies will also conduct seminars on issues including the Millennium Bug and Internet connections and future trends.

"The real highlight of the show are the seminars that will be conducted. They will bring together all the experts who will have the opportunity to discuss and exchange their views," said Zeid Nasser, a technical journalist.

Local distributors of American

companies provide the Jordanian market with the latest products relatively quickly, he added.

Several representatives of U.S. companies said Jordan's public and private sectors appear not to have done much to brace for the Millennium Bug, but some downplayed the worldwide scare about comprehensive systems failure on a global scale at the turn of the century.

"People here have not taken the problem seriously. But now that time is running short, they are showing more interest, especially banks," said Mohammad Al Qudat, sales manager of Al Ghanem Computer Systems & Solutions.

Another participant criticised Millennium Bug hysteria.

"Our company was a leader in preparing for the Millennium Bug and all our computers are 100 per cent compliant with the turn of the millennium," he said.

"But frankly, the problem is exaggerated. It is not as much of a problem as people are making it seem. Some people exaggerate for personal purposes. The regular man will not have any problems."

Mohammad Akkad, distribution manager for Compaq, said companies that must pay immediate attention to the problem are "businesses who depend on the accounting department and on dates and figures such as banks or insurance companies."

What's Going On

FILM

"Birth of the Renaissance: From Giotto to Massaccio" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. (The film will be preceded by a lecture by Dr. Mazin Asfour at 5:30 p.m.)

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY

Shakespeare's comedy "Kings and Clowns" at the Inter-Continental Hotel on Sunday and Monday April 11-12 at 8:30 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

Musical performance by Swedish group "Backa Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday and Friday April 8-9 at 8:00 p.m.

"Backa" Theatre Production, "Children and Youth" at Osama Machini Theatre on Friday and Saturday April 9-10 at 6:00 p.m.

Workshop entitled "Technical Elements in the Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday April 9-11 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

Workshop entitled "Creative Writing for the Theatre" by Lena Verzia Findell at Tyche Hotel on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday April 8-10 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

LECTURE

"Museums and Art in Jordan: A Personal Journey" by Dr. Carol Malt at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Saturday April 10 at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until April 8.

Plastic art exhibition by Hussein Da'ssa entitled "Horizons of the Nineties" at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, until April 20 (Tel. 56813034).

Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.

Works by Jordanian artist Sheren Audi Kurdi at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until April 28.

Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29 (Tel. 5699141/2). (The exhibition includes handicraft, pottery, handwoven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).

Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferdouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 12 (Tel. 4623297).

"Colours of the Sufist World" by plastic artist Abdul Hussein Twajj at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uttheina, until April 12.

Theatre festival opens today

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — The 6th Amman International Festival of Independent Theatre, organised by Al Fawanees and Egypt's Al Warsha Theatre Group, will open on Thursday at the Royal Cultural Centre.

In a press conference held on Wednesday, Mohammad Qabani, a member of Al Fawanees, said that this year the festival will be more diverse and will introduce new functions.

The festival's programme features performances by 18 theatre groups from 13 countries, seven workshops on various theatre crafts, including masks and puppet making, and a special programme featuring films and works by the famous Egyptian director Shadi Abdul Salam.

Participating countries include Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Palestine, Sweden, Australia and Tanzania. Performances will include classic plays,

monodrama, and dance.

The festival will this year expand its venues to include Irbid, Madaba and Ajlun, while in last year's festival performances were held in Amman and Irbid only.

Nader Omran, president of Al Fawanees, also announced that admission to all performances will be free of charge, a decision that followed complaints last year that the cost of tickets — JD4 each — was too expensive. "Other cultural activities and festivals in the capital are generally free of charge or charge a token fee."

Omran explained that the financial status of the festival, which is partially sponsored by the Municipality of Amman, is now "stable" and that it had received adequate funding from several organisations such as the American Ford Foundation and the Swedish Sida Organisation.

Al Fawanees has been under attack by the Board of the Artists Association in local

newspapers for receiving funding from "suspicious" foreign organisations and for "normalising" ties with Israel by inviting Al Qasaba, whose lead actor, Mohammad Bakri, is an Arab Israeli.

Omran pointed out that Bakri was invited to a theatre festival in November organised by the association. "[They said] he was a Palestinian then, but now he's an Israeli," he said.

Al Qasaba Group will participate in this festival, in a performance entitled "The Emigrant."

The festival will begin its activities with a Jordanian-Swedish concert: The Jordanian Rum Troupe and the Backa Theatre Musicians will perform their original composition "Oneness." The first performance of the festival will be a choreography entitled "We Can't Hold our Breath any Longer" by the Alias Dance Group of Switzerland.

JTC sends delayed phone bills

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — The Jordan Telecommunications Company started distributing January telephone bills on Wednesday after delays caused by technical problems, a company official said.

Subscribers wondered why no phone bills had been issued this year. An estimated 600,000 households and businesses subscribe to JTC services. The official said that part of the problem was due to an overload in billing at

the Royal Scientific Society, which is responsible for printing all the bills issued by governmental departments.

The official added that JTC's late delivery of the paper bills to RSS was due to delays in printing the company's logo on them.

It has been reported that the JTC will establish its own billing system. A central computer unit is expected to be installed this month in order to accelerate billing and delivery. Phone bills which are normally dis-

tributed on the 20th of each month will be distributed on the 4th instead.

JTC is a government-owned firm, but a year and a half ago it was authorised to operate on commercial basis as a first step towards privatising the institution.

JTC has exclusive authorisation to operate international, domestic, long distance and local basic telephone services in Jordan. Exclusivity expires in 2002.

Queen Noor to attend Hague Appeal for Peace

AMMAN (J.T.) — As the world emerges from the bloodiest and most war-torn century in history, an international movement led by grassroots activists, non-governmental organizations and leading figures in the struggle for peace and justice has emerged.

Seeking to implement the founding purpose of the United Nations to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," a coalition called the Hague Appeal for Peace has organized the week-long gathering to develop and promote a worldwide culture of peace and justice. Bringing together activists representing the human rights, environmental, women's and peace movements, as well as governments, the Hague Appeal will provide a forum for concrete action on a number of initiatives including the establishment of an international criminal court and implementation of the Ottawa Landmines Treaty.

World leaders including Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the First Lady of South Africa, Graça Machel, will join Nobel Peace Prize recipients including landmines activist Jody Williams, and East Timor independence movement

leader, José Ramos-Horta and hundreds of organisations and activists in the Hague on May 15th.

The appeal precedes inter-governmental meetings and events being held to commemorate the First Hague Peace Conference, which drew delegates from 26 governments to the Hague one hundred years ago. That gathering and a subsequent conference in 1907 made historic advances in the development of international law but, as history records, failed to limit war and the development of increasingly dangerous weapons. However, despite the cruel and violent legacy of the 20th century, leaders of this new international peace movement point to positive signs of humanity's ability to change.

The Hague Appeal has developed an agenda based on four basic themes: Prevention, Resolution and Transformation of Violent Conflict; Disarmament and Human Security; International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and Institutions and Root Causes of War/Culture of Peace.

Underpinning this effort is a commitment to the central role of civil society. According to the appeal's secretary general, William Pace, the institutions of

civil society already play a critical role in times of disaster and war, and the recent landmines treaty would not have been possible without work of the activist community. President of the Hague Appeal Cora Weiss says that the task of working towards the abolition of war cannot be entrusted to government alone: "We need only to consider the genocide in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and the spread of weapons of mass destruction to recognize that governments alone cannot accomplish our goals."

However, she continues "we are forging a new approach in which citizen advocates, progressive governments and official agencies will work together for common goals. We will embrace the moral imagination and courage necessary to create a culture of peace for the 21st century and learn the steps needed to abolish war."

Journalists are welcome to attend all scheduled events. Copies of the draft agenda are available from the offices of the Hague Appeal in New York and the Hague or from the website: <http://www.hague-peace.org>

The Hague Appeal for Peace convenes May 11-15.

Midwives: Why some rural women still seek their assistance

By Jumana Al Tamimi

AMMAN — The majority of Jordanian women deliver their babies at hospitals and clinics, but a few, mostly residing in remote rural areas, still resort to midwives to keep up with local traditions and to cut on soaring hospital expenses.

However, doctors warn that some midwives operating in desolate areas might be unlicensed to aid in deliveries or to ensure complication-free deliveries.

Medical advancements and increased literacy among women have dramatically cut down on maternal mortality rates (MMR) in the Kingdom, but the twin factors of poverty — a third of Jordanians live below the poverty line — and lack of education, have often led to traumatic childbirth experiences in rural areas.

"Lack of education and money are among major reasons for not seeking

medical advice during pregnancy, as women have traditional sources to rely on such as a neighbour, a mother, a mother-in-law or an aunt," says Ayman Abu Laban, director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Programmes in Jordan.

"Also, people consider some issues, like pregnancy, a natural phenomenon and not a disease," he said.

However, Abu Laban said women should visit a health centre early in pregnancy to learn more about their pregnancy and any possible complications.

Sahar Shakshir, a 40-year-old mother of three, still remembers a childbirth accident that led to the death of her neighbour when she was a child.

"When the woman was in labour, her family called a midwife and refused to take her to hospital, even after they realised the baby was not in the right position," she told the Jordan

Times. "The midwife tried to correct this by wrongly pushing on the mother's abdomen and the woman died in her hands."

A recent national survey on population and family health revealed that 93 per cent of all deliveries took place at hospitals and clinics and that almost two-thirds of them were attended by doctors and the rest by nurses or midwives.

The Health Ministry has banned uncertified midwives from practising to cut down on MMR and to improve health standards, officials said.

But officials continue to turn a blind eye on non-certified midwives who practice in remote areas because women have poor access to transportation and hospitals.

"In these areas, the role of the midwife will always be necessary," says Abu Laban, adding that most rural residents still prefer a female to assist a

pregnant woman during delivery.

Officials said out of 650 registered midwives, 371 are employed at 322 mother-and-child health care centres run by the Health Ministry across Jordan.

These centres provide a range of services — from contraceptives, to pregnancy consultation, childbirth, post-natal care and vaccination.

A joint report by the UNICEF and the Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO) published in 1996 put Jordan's MMR at 150 per 100,000.

However, the figures contrast sharply with those supplied by the ministry which put MMR at 48 per 100,000 in 1996.

A year later, the ministry published another study of 55 deaths and estimated the MMR at 40.5 per 100,000.

Seventy-one per cent of deaths in 1997 resulted from childbirth and 29 per cent from complications during pregnancy or childbirth, such as high

blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems and infections.

"High blood pressure is the most common reason for complications during pregnancy," said Ruwaida Resheid, medical practitioner and chief of the ministry's mother and child section.

"The other major reason is excessive bleeding, followed by infections," she said, citing a recent study.

Officials said improvements in prenatal care and overall standards of health services have reflected in a sharp decrease in Jordan's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). The IMR dropped from 67 per 1,000 live births in the 1970s to 29 per 1,000 in 1997.

The percentage of married women of child bearing age who use contraceptives also rose from 22.8 per cent in 1976 to 53 per cent now.

The country's fertility rates have declined significantly, dropping from 7.3 during 1975-76 to 4.6 during

1991-94. This has gone in tandem with growing literacy rates among women. According to conservative estimates, 73 per cent of women in Jordan are literate.

Family planning methods such as contraception are provided free by state-run centres and centres run by the Jordanian Family Planning Society.

However, religious misconceptions and strict social values that encourage large families have complicated nationwide efforts to organise family planning, officials said.

Efforts to address the problems of reproductive health in Jordan have been launched under the "safe motherhood" initiative in Jordan.

However, a National Safe Motherhood Committee, formed in 1988 remains defunct, largely because of continued administrative changes.

3 ex-ministers arrested over Rwanda genocide

ARUSHA, Tanzania (R) — Three former Rwandan government ministers implicated in the 1994 genocide of 800,000 people have been arrested exactly five years after the slaughter began, officials said on Wednesday.

The United Nations court prosecuting architects of the genocide said the three men were arrested on Tuesday in the West African nation of Cameroon, where they fled after their murderous regime was forced from power in July 1994.

They include former foreign minister Jerome Bicomumpaka and former commerce minister Justin Mugenzi, who allegedly played key roles in inciting ethnic Hutus to attack Rwanda's Tutsi minority and in justifying the slaughter to the outside world.

Human rights groups have accused Mugenzi of urging Hutus in a series of radio broadcasts to "kill all the Tutsis" and of travelling around the country to stir up ethnic hatred.

"If the population gets angry, it should be allowed to do what it wants," he allegedly told one meeting in the southern prefecture of Butare. He also allegedly

distributed machetes to local militiamen for use in the massacres.

Bicomumpaka defended the government on trips to Paris and the United Nations in New York, where he told the U.N. Security Council that the violence sweeping his country was entirely the fault of Tutsi rebels.

He also claimed Tutsis were not the only victims, saying they were attacking their Hutu neighbours.

The third suspect arrested in Cameroon is Prosper Mugiraneza, who ran Rwanda's civil service in the interim government set up in the first days of the genocide.

The U.N. court, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), said in a statement released late on Tuesday that Cameroon police had arrested all three men earlier in the day and that they would soon be transferred to the ICTR, which is based in the north Tanzanian town of Arusha.

Rwanda's genocide began on April 6, 1994, just hours after President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was killed in a rocket attack on his plane.

The assassination was apparently ordered by Hutu extremists inside the government and the armed forces and, within hours, they mobilised civilian militias to begin butchering Tutsis and moderate Hutus. About 800,000 people were killed over the next 100 days before a Tutsi-led rebel army, the Rwandan patriotic front, seized power in July 1994 and ended the genocide.

Rwanda is this week marking the fifth anniversary of the genocide and the remains of thousands of Tutsi victims were to be reburied on Wednesday in an official ceremony in the southern Rwandan town of Kibeho.

The ICTR has already tried and convicted three genocide suspects, sentencing two of them to life in prison and the other to 15 years behind bars. With the three new arrests, it will have 38 suspects in its custody.

Rwanda is also prosecuting genocide suspects under its own laws. It has arrested about 124,000 people but only 1,282 cases have so far been heard. Twenty-two convicts were publicly executed last year.



A firemen's helicopter and several fire engines are seen in front of Spain's Valley of the Fallen April 7 after an explosion damaged the tomb of former dictator Francisco Franco inside the huge mausoleum carved out of a hillside near Madrid. No one was hurt in the blast, which caused some damage to the area around the altar in the cavern that was chiselled out of the granite by Republican Civil War prisoners (Reuters photo)

Basilica where Franco buried damaged in bomb attempt

MADRID (AFP) — An explosion Wednesday damaged the basilica at the Valley of the Fallen (Valle de los Caídos) north-west of Madrid where fascist dictator Franco is buried, a government spokesman said.

There were no victims in the explosion, which damaged a confessional and pews in the basilica.

The device had been planted near the tombs of Franco and the founder of the extreme right Falangist

party Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera.

The spokesman said an anonymous caller from the 'GRAPO' extreme left-wing activist group, told the Madrid newspaper El Pais earlier Wednesday that it planned to "attack the Valley of the Fallen."

GRAPO started to become more active in 1998 with a series of bombing attempts on public buildings and employment agencies.

Since its foundation in

1975 three days after the execution of five leftist militants, the GRAPO was extremely active until the early 1980s.

The Spanish government holds it responsible for more than 80 murders and has tried to disband it on numerous occasions.

The basilica, which commemorates those who died in the 1936-39 Spanish civil war, was built in the 1940s by prisoners on the losing side.

'Khmer Rouge will face foreign judges, prosecutors'

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The Cambodian government has agreed to let foreign judges and prosecutors play a central role in the trial of captured Khmer Rouge chief Ta Mok, officials announced Wednesday.

Visiting United States Senator John Kerry said the compromise from Premier Hun Sen would ensure the planned domestic trial of "The Butcher" met strict international standards.

He said he had also been assured that other former rebels were not immune from prosecution.

"The prime minister agreed that it would be useful to have international judges and prosecutors take part in the process," said Kerry, who is a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"This is a very positive step forward. It will allow us to have a cooperative effort that can be credible, and one that the international community can have confidence in," he said at the end of his one-day visit.

Kerry said Hun Sen had also given him assurances during their talks that "if the investigations show that there ought to be further trial of many individuals that this is possible to accomplish."

The agreement, the senator said, would maintain "respect for Cambodian sovereignty ... but at the same time make it a very accountable and realistic process."

Hun Sen's coalition partner Prince Norodom Ranariddh and close aides to the prime minister confirmed the government's U-turn on the thorny issue.

"Hun Sen will not object to a trial of Ta Mok in a national court with the presence of an international judge," the prince said following his own discussions with Kerry.

"To do this, Hun Sen will have to go to parliament to amend the law or create a new law and parliament and myself are ready to facilitate this formula for our judiciary," he explained. Cambodia has come under fire for rejecting United Nations recommendations for an international genocide tribunal, and then effectively ruling out a compromise option suggested by U.N. chief Kofi Annan of a trial "international in character."

Hun Sen has argued that Cambodia's courts are up to the job of trying leaders of the 1975 to 1979 Pol Pot regime — blamed for the deaths of up to two million — and said a foreign-run trial would

undermine sovereignty. However the latest position — following a string of mixed signals from Phnom Penh — reverses Hun Sen's earlier rejection of anything except foreign legal experts.

Hun Sen has also been criticised for failing to guarantee that Ta Mok's surviving comrades will also be made to stand trial. Until Wednesday he had only shown willingness to accept the "assistance" of foreign legal experts.

Other surviving Khmer Rouge leaders include Pol Pot's ideological guru Nuon Chea and public face Khieu Samphan who both defected in December, as well as number three Jeng Sary, who split in 1996.

The three live in peaceful retirement in the western semi-autonomous former rebel base of Pailin. Hun Sen has so far refused to ensure the trio live as anything other than "simple citizens," a condition of their defections.

One other senior figure in "Democratic Kampuchea," Ta Mok's former deputy Ke Pauk, was recently made a one-star general in the army to reward his defection last year.

Pol Pot himself died in April 1998.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spanish judge adds 11 new cases against Pinochet

MADRID (R) — The Spanish judge seeking to prosecute Chile's Augusto Pinochet sent details of 11 new torture cases to Britain on Wednesday to strengthen his extradition request, a court source said. Pinochet has been under house arrest in Britain since last October while courts and authorities have pondered whether he can be extradited to Spain to face charges of human rights abuses during his rule in Chile. British Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Jack Straw said last week he was reviewing Pinochet's case after Britain's highest court gave conditional approval for his extradition. Britain's house of lords ruled on March 24 that while Pinochet's arrest was legal, he could not be tried for crimes committed before 1998, the year a United Nations convention on torture became part of British law. Judge Baltasar Garzon's original dossier alleged 3,000 people died between 1973 and 1990 under Pinochet's rule, including dozens of Spaniards. The latest British ruling excluded many of these but Garzon has already sent evidence of at least 40 cases of human rights abuses after 1988. "Garzon has now broadened the charges asking for 11 new cases of alleged torture to be included," the court source said. Documents detailing the new cases had been sent to London, but no further details of the alleged crimes were immediately available, the source added.

Loser in Nigeria's presidential poll will not appeal ruling

ABUJA (AFP) — Olu Falae, the losing candidate in Nigeria's presidential poll will not appeal the ruling of a court upholding the victory of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo, his lawyer has said. G.O.K. Ajayi, leading counsel to former finance minister Falae, the candidate defeated in the Feb. 27 presidential election, on Tuesday said his client would not appeal the ruling of the Abuja Court of Appeal. On Monday, the court dismissed the challenge filed last month by Falae. "The present position now is that he (Falae) does not intend to appeal," Ajayi told journalists here. Shortly after the ruling, Ajayi said his client would take the legal challenge to the Supreme Court, Nigeria's highest court. Obasanjo, who as a soldier ran Nigeria from 1976 to 1979, was last month declared the winner of the Feb. 27 poll. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said he had won with more than 18 million votes to Falae's 11 million. The former minister contested the results, citing a massive electoral fraud, among other grounds. The court threw out the petitions, saying none of the allegations were proven and only a "feeble" reference had been made to charges of voter fraud. Obasanjo, who returned to Nigeria on Tuesday from overseas trips, is expected to be sworn in on May 29, ending more than 15 years of military rule in Africa's most populous country.

Taiwan to reorganise crowded election schedule

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwanese are proud of their young democracy, but many are now calling for an occasional break from what seems like a non-stop campaign. Over a decade of top-to-bottom democratisation, Taiwan seems to be perpetually in the middle of a political race, with major polls held practically every year and minor ones even more often on the island. Now, officials say they want to consolidate all elections to just once every two years, hopelessly reducing the burden on public services and political party machinery. "We want to bring our system closer to that of other mature democracies," John Chang, secretary general of the ruling Nationalist party, told reporters Wednesday. Critics say that if politicians can't rein in Taiwan's raucous election culture — in which spending limits are ignored and banners appear weeks before campaigning legally begins — then at least it must be confined to acceptable intervals. Such changes would be taken up by the national assembly, Taiwan's annual constitutional congress, when it meets this summer. That's probably the best opportunity they've had to effect changes since 1999 is a rare election-free year. Since the end of martial law in 1987 and the introduction of full democracy, Taiwanese politicians have taken to the campaign trail with a vengeance. Sound trucks blare candidates' messages through the streets, massive rallies carry on late into the night, and the sides of entire office buildings are leased to candidates to paste their slogans across. Many Taiwanese say they tire of the aural and visual battering, often accompanied by vicious mudslinging and incidents such as one last year in which a candidate lobbed live piglets at a rival.

No progress on high speed train project in Japan-China talks

BEIJING (AFP) — Talks between China and Japan on building a high-speed train line between Beijing and Shanghai failed to make progress during a visit here by Japan's transport minister, a Japanese official said on Wednesday. "There were no new developments, nothing has changed. They only said no new decisions on the project have been made," the official at the Japanese embassy in Beijing said. Japan's Transport Minister Jiro Kawasaki ended a four-day visit on Tuesday. The talks covered the same topics as a Japanese-Chinese vice ministerial meeting in December. Dates for a potential international bid for the project were also not announced, the official said. The 1,310-kilometre project is expected to transport passengers between China's two largest cities at 350 kilometres an hour, and will cost an estimated \$12 billion. The Chinese side refused to name a possible go-ahead date for the project and would not confirm or deny reports in the Japanese press that the project had been set back to the year 2006, from the original 2000 date, the official said. Japan is expected to meet stiff competition for the project from an alliance between the Anglo-French company Alstom (TGV) and Germany's Siemens (ICE) and is hoping to introduce its Shinkansen high speed train, a train that initially was not designed for export. The French side hopes to renew negotiations on its TGV high speed train during France-China Committee to be held April 15 and 16 in Beijing.

India's embattled government builds its defences

NEW DELHI (R) — India's wounded coalition government prepared to defend itself on Wednesday against an impending challenge from the closing ranks of opposition parties.

It was still far from clear whether the government was heading for collapse.

Main opposition party Congress — which has been succeeded by three coalition governments since it lost power in 1996 — was keeping its cards close to its chest.

Local media reports said Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was courting various opposition parties to forge an alternative government from the fragmented ranks of parliament, but was not confident she could pull it off.

There was no word from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's office on whether he had accepted Tuesday's resignation by two ministers from an estranged but crucial coalition partner, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party.

But his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which leads the year-old government, said there was no possibility of a

rapprochement with the mutinous Tamil Nadu state-based party.

The BJP appeared to be casting around for new allies.

"Our view is very clear, nobody has a right to be in the government and play the role of an opposition," BJP General Secretary Venkaiah Naidu told a news conference in the southern state's capital, Madras.

"That is why we have had to come to the very painful decision that there's no question of a rapprochement with them now." The AIADMK's charismatic leader, former movie starlet Jayaram Jayalalitha, has threatened several times to withdraw from the coalition, but has always pulled back from the brink.

But political analysts say her relations with the BJP have now deteriorated too far to be mended.

Should the AIADMK — which controls a possibly make-or-break 19 seats in the 545-member lower house — quit the coalition, the minority government would struggle to win a confidence vote.

Commerce Minister Ramakrishna Hegde said in Bombay he was sure the

government would win a confidence vote if one was called after parliament resumed next week. Many feel a vote is likely.

If the BJP-led coalition lost such a vote, the president could ask Congress to form an alternative government. If it declined, the current government would continue in a caretaker role until fresh elections. India's third since 1996.

Hegde said the coalition was considering an alliance with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) if the AIADMK walked out.

The DMK, now in opposition, controls six seats. It holds power at state level in Tamil Nadu and Jayalalitha has made repeated calls for its dismissal.

"These things are also being considered at the appropriate levels. I cannot say anything else," Hegde said when asked if a tie-up with the AIADMK's arch rival was being considered.

The political storm broke after the government refused AIADMK demands to reinstate a dismissed navy chief, to get rid of the defence minister who sacked him and to order a parliamentary inquiry into the whole affair.

Fired naval chief accuses minister of corrupting armed forces

BOMBAY, India (AP) — India's naval commander who was fired three months ago accused the defence minister Wednesday of corrupting and politicising the armed forces.

Vishnu Bhagwat said he is not to blame for the crisis threatening to bring down the ruling federal coalition.

An opposition party that is part of the coalition has demanded that Bhagwat be given back his job and the defence minister, George Fernandes, be fired for creating the mess.

Bhagwat was fired on charges of indiscipline and refusing to implement the minister's orders on transfers of officials. Since the dismissal, Bhagwat and Fernandes have traded

charges.

In recent weeks, opposition parties have made the Bhagwat dismissal a political issue. Last week, the Tamil regional party known by its acronym AIADMK said it will pull out of the coalition if Bhagwat is not reinstated.

On Wednesday, Bhagwat responded to charges Fernandes levied at a specially convened news conference in New Delhi when he disclosed details of correspondence between them.

Bhagwat accused the defence minister of having a plan to "destroy and break up the armed forces of India by communalising, politicising and corrupting them."

Bhagwat said he was fired without any com-

munication from the government and without a court martial.

Fernandes said Tuesday that the government considered various options, including a court martial, but decided to fire him instead for leaking sensitive defence information to the media.

"If I have leaked information, there must be some evidence of what, where, when and to whom and for what motive ... This is not a charge, but slander," Bhagwat said.

The former naval commander reiterated his charge that Fernandes was keen on importing material and that he stalled indigenous efforts to build submarines and an aircraft carrier.



Zoo keepers hold up two new-born fennec foxes at Sydney's Taronga Zoo April 7. Three young male fennec foxes were born eight weeks ago to parents Emi and Tokar, new arrivals to Taronga Zoo from California's Living Desert park in the United States. Fennec foxes are the smallest fox species with large distinctive ears and are native to North Africa's Sahara Desert, the Sinai and Arabia (Reuters photo)

Sri Lanka government in narrow poll win

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka's Ruling People's Alliance on Wednesday narrowly won five regional polls that tested its support ahead of national elections due next year.

Election officials said the ruling party had won 120 of 263 seats up for grabs in the north central, central, western, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provincial councils.

Under Sri Lanka's convoluted proportional representation electoral system, the ruling coalition was also granted 10 bonus seats on the basis of the percentage of votes it polled.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) took 112 seats, the left-wing People's Liberation Front 15 while the rest went to smaller parties.

"Despite rigging of election in several areas by PA (People's

Alliance) politicians the voters have sent a clear message that a majority of them no longer support the PA," the UNP General Secretary Gamini Anurakula said in a statement.

Political analysts said the ruling coalition's victory margin in most councils was so thin that it would be forced to enter into alliances with other parties to form administrations.

They had earlier said an overall win could tempt President Chandrika Kumaratunga to move up parliamentary and presidential elections scheduled for next year to strengthen her coalition's position in parliament, where it has only a one-seat majority.

"The narrow PA victory simply creates instability," said Nourab Fared, head of research at MMBL Phillips Stock Brokers.

"This is a confusing signal that will add to Sri Lanka's sense of drift," said a Western diplomat.

But the Colombo stock exchange welcomed the result. The all share index ended 3.68 points or 0.69 per cent higher at 539.78 on speculative retail buying in anticipation that the PA's win would trigger a minority by the end of the week.

Analysts said Kumaratunga will now have to decide quickly how she planned to restore her coalition's popularity and improve its chances of comfortably winning future elections.

The PA's small majority in the 225-member house makes it difficult to garner the two-thirds support needed for its political package aimed at ending the country's long ethnic war.

ment without the support of the UNP, envisages a devolution of additional powers to provincial councils, including one dominated by minority Tamils.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have been fighting for a separate homeland for Tamils in the north and east since 1983.

Five people died in poll related violence, officials said.

The centre for monitoring election violence reported several incidents of assault, intimidation and electoral malpractices towards the end of polling. A night curfew was clamped on the polling regions to avoid trouble during the counting of votes.

Election officials said some 69 per cent of the estimated 7.2 million voters had cast ballots.

Three said killed in Borneo clash between troops and rioters

JAKARTA (AFP) — Three men were believed killed when Indonesian troops fired shots to ward off an attack on Wednesday by thousands of rioters trying to free 100 people detained in a town in West Kalimantan, a television report said.

Thousands of ethnic Malays and Dayaks, who descended on Singkawang in dozens of trucks, clashed with security forces blocking their way, the private Surya Citra Televisi (SCT) television station said.

An SCT reporter quoted West Kalimantan police chief Chairul Rasyidi as saying three people were believed to have been killed during the clash.

Police and troops from the strategic army reserve had been deployed to quell the angry rioters who were trying to free those detained after recent bloody ethnic attacks.

At dusk a policeman in Singkawang said clashes were continuing on the northern edge of the city. "The situation is grave. The clashes ... are still

going on. We're still on alert," Second Sergeant Risdianto told AFP.

Risdianto said troops had forced the mob to retreat but they were trying to return to Singkawang.

He refused to disclose a death toll or confirm the three reported deaths, saying police were still collecting data from the scene.

The mob, from the neighbouring districts of Pangsang and Tebas, had come to demand the release of some 100 people detained by police in Singkawang following two days of violence there.

"Most were arrested when they were attacking houses but some were arrested when they met to plan attacks or when preparing their weapons," Major Turmino Hadi of the Sambas district police said by telephone from Singkawang.

Hadi said Dayak tribesmen, Malays and ethnic Chinese were among those arrested and detained at the district police station. At least six houses belonging

to Madurese settlers were torched late Tuesday 40 kilometres south of Singkawang, but there were no reports of casualties, he said.

The violence pitting Madurese settlers against Malays and Dayak tribesmen in Sambas district has already left more than 200 people dead and a trail of destruction of Madurese properties and farmlands.

It has also displaced some 29,000 Madurese settlers.

Massacres, torchings, decapitation and mutilations as well as ritual cannibalism of Madurese were widespread in March as crudely armed Dayaks and Malays roamed the Sambas countryside hunting down the settlers.

The Dayaks and the Madurese have been involved in at least eight major outbreaks of ethnic violence since 1968. The last clash in 1998 left some 300 dead according to official figures while independent tallies spoke of up to 4,000 dead.

Another flashpoint, the

Maluku islands, has been racked by Muslim-Christian violence which has left some 280 dead since mid-January. Southeast Maluku district's chief Hussein Rahayana Wednesday reported sporadic violence in several islands of the district.

"Some violence is still happening in villages in Kei Besar and Kei Kecil (districts) but I have not yet received more precise reports," said Rahayana, who was speaking from the town of Tual. He added that Tual itself was calm Wednesday.

But Maluku police spokesman Major Philip Jekiel said in Ambon, the provincial capital, that 28 people had been killed in Southeast Maluku this week. The figure would bring the death toll since violence broke out in Tual on March 31 to 82.

Seventeen people were killed and 44 seriously injured in Tual and Kei Kecil sub-districts on Monday while 10 were killed and 12 seriously wounded in Elat on the neighbouring island of Kei Besar the same day, Jekiel said.

Hani killers refused amnesty in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — The two killers of former South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani have been refused amnesty for his murder, the amnesty committee of the truth commission announced Wednesday.

Hani, a leading anti-apartheid figure, was shot dead by Polish immigrant Janusz Walus and Clive Derby-Lewis, a former Conservative Party MP, on April 10, 1993, a year before South Africa's first all-race elections.

The committee said both applicants — serving life sentences for the crime — had failed to make a full disclosure and prove a political motiva-

tion for the murder in their application.

The committee said neither applicant was acting with the authority of the Conservative Party, "which they purport to represent in assassinating Mr. Hani", and had acted alone.

"The CP has never adopted, propagated or espoused a policy of violence or assassination of political opponents", the committee said.

Hani was one of the most popular black leaders during apartheid, whose murder launched a series of mass protests by Communist Party and African National Congress (ANC) supporters, and according to some analysts, nearly provoked a race

war which could have scuppered the 1994 elections.

A top commander of its outlawed Umkhonto-weSiswe (Spear of the Nation) military wing, Hani was elected in 1991 to the ANC leadership executive, of which the Communist Party is a key part.

The amnesty committee last year heard evidence that Hani was shot, execution style in the driveway of his home.

The two amnesty applicants were convicted of Hani's murder in October, 1993, receiving the death penalty, while a third suspect, Derby-Lewis' wife Gaye, was acquitted.

The death sentences were commuted to life imprison-

ment after the death penalty was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.

"The committee found that it was clear the two were not acting within the course and scope of their duties or on express authority from the Conservative Party in assassinating Mr. Hani," the committee said.

The committee also rejected Walus' claim that he had acted on Derby-Lewis' orders.

"He (Walus) had a clear understanding of the political situation and was active in rightwing politics. He participated fully in political discussions and hatching the plot to assassinate Mr. Hani," the committee said.

Bishop Belo condemns 'massacre' in East Timor

LIQUICA, Indonesia (AP) — At least 25 people were shot or hacked to death in a massacre by anti-independence militia fighters backed by the Indonesian army, East Timor spiritual leader Roman Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo claimed Wednesday.

In an emotional media conference held after inspecting a bloodied churchyard where Tuesday's killings took place in Liquica town, Belo condemned the violence, saying he was "ashamed to be an Indonesian."

The slayings have cast a shadow over plans by the United Nations to hold a July ballot for East Timor's people on whether to remain part of Indonesia as an autonomous state or to break away altogether.

"I can say that this is a massacre. We are entering the third millennium, but after this incident we are back in the middle ages," Belo told reporters at his home in Dili, East Timor's capital.

Belo called for calm and demanded Indonesian President B.J. Habibie investigate Tuesday's violence, the latest in a string of clashes between bitterly divided armed groups either for or against independence from Indonesia, which annexed East Timor as its 27th province in

1976.

He also demanded the international community help prevent more violence in the half-island territory.

The former Portuguese colony has been wracked by guerrilla warfare and human rights abuses since Indonesia invaded in 1975. The attack on Tuesday was one of the worst since Indonesian soldiers fired on separatist protesters at a cemetery in Dili in 1991, killing at least 50. Human rights activists put the death toll at more than 200.

Many of Tuesday's dead were civilians who had taken shelter in the church and an adjacent priest's home after days of communal violence in and around Liquica, about 29 kilometres west of East Timor's capital, Dili.

Belo, the 1996 co-winner of the Nobel peace prize, said the death toll had been confirmed in a letter from East Timor's military commander, Col. Tono Suratman, who accompanied him with journalists to Liquica under heavy armed guard on Wednesday.

Belo said witnesses had told him the number of slain could be higher.

Rafael Dos Santos, Liquica's parish priest, said hundreds of armed militia gang members

fired at terrified villagers cowering in his house and the church. Many civilians were cut down by swords and machetes, he said.

Dozens of Indonesian troops fired into the air or simply watched the carnage take place, he said.

The ground outside the church and inside the adjacent priest's house was splattered with blood.

Residents of the town told the Associated Press that some of victims were children.

Militia members and dozens of troops were seen on the otherwise deserted streets of the town on Wednesday.

Suratman, who had earlier put the death toll at only five, declined to comment. He said troops killed two separatists after they fired on soldiers.

Initial reports had put the number of victims at 45.

Suratman warned earlier that his troops would take tough action to prevent more bloodshed.

But pro-independence activists accused soldiers of provoking unrest, and any escalation in military operations could exacerbate tensions in the former Portuguese colony.

U.N.-sponsored talks on a peaceful solution in East Timor had gained momentum in recent

months, but escalating violence between factions and militant rhetoric have threatened to undermine the peace process.

"The army and the police department will take strict measures to restore law enforcement as well as human rights and public order in the province," Armed Forces Commander Gen. Wiranto said in the national capital, Jakarta. He did not elaborate. Wiranto, like many Indonesians, uses only one name.

This week, East Timor's imprisoned rebel leader, Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao, urged his guerrilla band to step up attacks on the Indonesian military, saying Jakarta was not serious about its pledge to consider independence.

Gusmao said the military had been arming civilian militias in an effort to sabotage the U.N.-sponsored vote. If East Timor's 800,000 people turn down autonomy, Indonesia has said, then they are entitled to independence.

Gusmao has also appealed to the United Nations to dispatch a peacekeeping force before the territory is engulfed in violence.

Indonesian Justice Minister Muladi said Gusmao's remarks were inflammatory and that his status under house arrest in Jakarta would be reviewed.

Crusading Russian prosecutor defends record in parliament

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's chief prosecutor, embattled in a sex and graft scandal, defended himself before parliament on Wednesday but shied away from revealing any details he might have about Kremlin corruption.

"I am not grabbing on to power, but I will also not make a retreat," Yuri Skuratov told a session of the state Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament led by the Kremlin's opponents.

"They are continuing to blackmail the prosecutor's office in connection with several criminal investigations," he said.

But Skuratov refused to answer repeated queries from lawmakers about whether he could offer details — which he claims to have — about wide-ranging graft and corruption among senior state bureaucrats.

Russia has been hit by scandal ever since Skuratov declared that he was launching criminal investigations into the top echelons of government and Moscow's most powerful business circles.

Following that announcement, President Boris Yeltsin twice attempted to fire Skuratov. The first time Russia's parliament refused to approve Skuratov's

resignation.

The prosecutor general's career now remains in limbo while parliament again mulls his fate.

The scandal was whipped up further on Tuesday when prosecutors issued arrest warrants for two powerful business tycoons — Boris Berezovsky and Alexander Smolensky — who both had helped fund Yeltsin's reelection campaign.

Skuratov and mostly-leftist allies had been pitted against the Kremlin and several business barons who have benefited from controversial deals during the

Yeltsin reform years.

Skuratov's investigations have directly targeted these so-called "oligarchs" and have even led up to and inside the gates of the Kremlin itself.

But his corruption drive became bogged down in sleaze with the emergence last month of a videotape apparently showing the 46-year-old prosecutor cavorting with prostitutes.

A criminal case has been opened against Skuratov, enabling Yeltsin to suspend him for "actions which besmirch the honour of the prosecutor's work" last Friday.

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Time to forge ahead

PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE concerned with one major demand of their government as their debate wrapped up ahead of the vote of confidence. They wanted assurances that Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh would take the bull by the horns and fulfil his pledges made in his government policy statement. Summing up the concerns of many lawmakers on the most pressing issue, Deputy Ali Abul Ragheb called on the prime minister to take effective and meaningful measures to redress the dire economic conditions in the Kingdom.

One of Abul Ragheb's main recommendations was to lower interest rates in a bid to improve the investment climate. But although lowering the interest rate indeed promotes investment, it can also cause a run on the dinar. Lowering the exchange rate of the dinar would promote exports but would make imports more expensive. A cheaper dinar would also lead to an inflationary spiral that could get out of control. For the poor, who constitute one-third of the population, higher inflation would mean even more hardships.

Armed with a vote of confidence, Rawabdeh can sift through the various recommendations attached to those votes and forge ahead on all fronts. With renewed hopes of the Arab Gulf countries opening up to Jordan politically and economically, the stage is set for solving at least the major bottlenecks in the national economy.

His Majesty King Abdullah's visit to Saudi Arabia has strengthened the level of cooperation between the two countries. Similar visits to other Arab capitals inside and outside the Gulf region can offer new windows of opportunities to alleviate unemployment and open up new markets to Jordanian exporters. Given these developments, the new government can perhaps succeed where others have failed by tackling the Kingdom's problems in an active mode.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh commented on the government's "surprising" decision to extend winter time for the whole year, noting that by this Jordan will be in sync with Western Europe. It is understandable that a change to summer time in a country like Jordan has not the same level of importance as in northern countries, as the difference between day and night is not big, said Faneh adding however, that Jordanians are concerned with the sun's movement more than Europeans, because their activities depend on it. Although there may be reasons for the decision, Faneh criticised the government for not bothering to explain these reasons. British colonialists chose this specific timing for Jordan to suit their life in Palestine and Egypt, argued the writer, who added that the time now also follows Mecca. Even if the government has good reasons behind its decision, the issue must be postponed until next year to prepare people: it is not logical to leave such a matter to governments that may change every year, he added. In countries which respect order, changing from summer to winter time takes place at a certain specified date. Faneh expressed his hope that the decision is not part of measures to cope with this summer's water shortage.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Juneidi said Jordan's water problems, which will get worse because of the growing population, cannot be solved with "pronouncements." The water problem has revealed the essence of Jordanian-Israeli relations and the meaning of so-called economic cooperation. Juneidi said, Israel uses the water issue to put pressure on the Kingdom any time the Jewish state feels that Jordan might harm its interests, he argued. This is a well-studied Israeli policy, and people are deluding themselves if they believe Israel is not capable of allowing Jordanians to go thirsty, the writer warned. He quoted experts as saying that Arab politicians do not consider the long term when they sign an agreement or set up a project, because of their "tunnel vision," through which, he said, they cannot recognise that the existence of Israel has caused both economic and water crisis in the Middle East.

Women and stereotyping

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

THE OTHER day, I was flipping through some Arab satellite channels, when a large group of women, all in full religious attire neatly seated in a packed auditorium applauding, attracted my attention. I thought it was a conference of some sort — perhaps one about the rights of religious women — or a new talk show. I turned the volume up, intending to listen to what the speaker — also a woman in full attire — was saying. However, to my disappointment and shock it turned out to be a stupid detergent commercial.

It was not a normal commercial, for it lasted a good 2 minutes. The women were applauding enthusiastically in a packed semi-circular auditorium, a replica of some of the large Western talk-show auditoriums. A woman stood for a few seconds in front of a microphone, while the seated women applauded more enthusiastically, and then she began her intermittent series of proclamations, delivered in a soft but patronising tone, about a certain kind of cleaning detergent: how effective it was in removing stains and dirt, how affordable it is, how widespread its use now, how all women love it, and so forth. Every time she finished a statement, the women applauded — just as in the carefully orchestrated Western talk shows. The woman at the microphone finished her proclamations,

and the seated women burst into a final, long enthusiastic applause.

One is, of course, appalled by the fact that, in today's world (less than a year before the new millennium), some irresponsible or ignorant and mindless commercial producers among us not only determine and impose on us what we watch but insult our intelligence and our values in the bluntest of ways. And one is equally appalled by the speed with which we borrow things from other cultures (especially mindless or harmful things), without thinking about their implications. The setting is an exact copy of those found in some of the very popular, mindless talk shows these days in which one or a couple of people come to speak about themselves and a hundred sit for the sole purpose of applauding, acting interested and happy and smiling to the camera.

But one is also appalled, above all, because such commercials are an insult to women and a blow to the cause of women's rights which has been progressing slowly but steadily worldwide and in our part of the world.

Why should detergents, washing of clothes, washing of dishes (and many other mundane or household tasks) be always associated with women? Who says that it is the job of a woman to wash clothes. Such commercials

are uninformed, un-informing and damaging because they resuscitate, resurrect, bring to life, promote and foster many misconceptions about women which have in many parts of the world been deconstructed, refuted, rejected and buried for good.

Detergents, washing clothes, washing dishes, dusting, sweeping, house-keeping is as much the business of men as it is the business of women. We live in a world which has started (after centuries of injustice) to view things from the right angle. Relations among the sexes are supposed to be built on mutual respect, equitable division of labour and partnership. Men work, and women work (unless they themselves choose not to); women cook, and men cook; women wash dishes, and men wash dishes; women do laundry, and men do the laundry; women sweep, and men sweep. That is the way it is, and that is the way it should be.

But the commercial is an insult to religious women in our part of the world. There are so many stereotypes, not only about but in our part of the world and in our own midst about women in headscarves. Not only are they perceived by many among us as being forced to wear religious clothes and are imprisoned in these, they are perceived as passive, submissive, traditional, weak, boring, unintelligent and gullible.

To have them sit in a semicircular auditorium applauding is very demeaning and very unfair indeed. It is a situation and a setting which stereotypes such women and promotes notions of control, passivity, submission and silliness. Women in religious attire in our part of the world are not only intelligent, active, and assertive, but they are also open-minded, outspoken, aware of their rights and deeply involved in the life of society at large. They are not the homely, "domesticated," "imprisoned" or "brain-washed" type who would applaud foolishly and mindlessly for a cleaning detergent.

Some of my best, assertive, most

involved students in campus life are covered women. Some of our most competent and efficient employees (and employees in our various social spheres) are

Many of the most intelligent, outspoken, impressive and eloquent participants in the TV show I hosted for Jordan Television not long ago (in which all participants spoke, and no one was invited for the purpose of applauding and smiling to the camera) were women in headscarves.

Islam (apart from bad social habits and customs which have nothing to do with religion) does not confine women to their homes, does not say that they alone should cook or clean the dishes. In the matter of housework, it states clearly that both women and men should share. It is a well-known fact that if women decide to do the cleaning or cooking at home, it is (Islam states) because they are nice and generous, not because they have to. They have the right to ask their husbands, older brothers or fathers to share with them household chores. If men in our society think cooking or cleaning is the responsibility of women, they do not know their religion, or they know but are selfish and abusive.

It is indeed a shame for us to stereotype ourselves. It is a shame for our mass media to continue to demean our women in such a shameless ways.



How to fake a UFO: Last week's April Fool's story brought a wide range of responses from readers. Unfortunately it was a hoax, and the picture was set up (left) by the very real, Czech journalist Vaclav Skutil. After all, as one reader quite rightly pointed out, who could believe the Jordan Times is able to afford JD75,000 for a photo?

Letter to the editor — Outrageous advert

YESTERDAY MORNING I sat looking at the advertisement from Al Hafriawi on page 11 of the JT for a long time wondering what it was they were trying to sell. When I realised they are trying to 'sell' Sri Lankan maids, I got very angry and actually phoned the number published, and told them that they should treat people with respect. Slavery was abolished long ago and rightly so and 'even maids' are people and not washing machines or cattle. I don't think the 'ambassador of the happy family' as they call themselves in the advertisement, quite understood what I was talking about and I am disappointed with the Jordan Times for publishing such an offensive advertisement, and I sincerely hope that

by publishing this letter some people may in future become more careful with what they say and print.

Liesbeth Tangelder
 Amman

The Jordan Times apologises for the inadvertent placement of the advert which could be deemed inappropriate in its depiction of domestic help.

Striking a balance in Lebanon

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

THOUGH NOT really the fault of the Lebanese government headed by Dr. Salim Hoss that came in late last year, Lebanon seems to have lapsed into an economic malaise over the last four months. The mood today in Beirut is one of pessimism and scepticism about the wisdom of the past few years' economic policy.

Traditionally, the Lebanese economy depended on commerce and other services such as banking and tourism, with manufacturing playing a secondary role. The Hariri governments that were in power for most of the 1990s sought to restore the country's role as the regional services centre and commercial entrepot, but this seems to have been a partial failure. Though adept at reconstruction and getting Lebanese infrastructure back in shape, Hariri and his team were not able to restore Beirut to its pre-war glory. This was not surprising, since the world and the region had moved on during the civil war years of 1975-91. During that conflict, new financial centres developed in the Gulf to challenge Lebanon's leadership, and Arab tourists abandoned Beirut and the Lebanese mountains for points as far apart as London, Cannes, Cyprus and Dubai, among others. Trade has also been slow to recover, as the decline in the price of oil and the embargo against Iraq has greatly reduced the opportunities for Lebanon's merchants.

These negative factors have instead refocused attention on the manufacturing sector. Lebanese industry is currently going through a far-reaching process of change. As it strives to overcome the devastating effects of war and growing competition in traditional markets, Lebanon's industrialists must also face the challenge of trade liberalisation with low-cost neighbours and with Europe.

While some Lebanese manufactures have important underlying advantages, serious weaknesses exist in the sector as a whole. Family ownership and local links, key factors for survival during the war years, must now be supplemented by new management methods, higher technology, and international standards in quality and marketing.

The vulnerability of Lebanese manufacturing in export markets is one of the factors that, despite the country's strong tradition of free enterprise, has delayed the

signing of the proposed Association Agreement with the European Union. A deal with the EU is vital for Lebanon, and strengthening the manufacturing sector's export capacity is, therefore, crucial if the Lebanese are to benefit fully from further liberalisation.

The manufacturing industry in Lebanon faces a range of problems that stem from three basic causes. The first of these is the fragmentation that affects many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This means that many SMEs lack the scale and the access to resources that will allow penetration of wider markets, development of new products, and learning from larger firms.

A second group of problems relates to the effects of the war. During this period, Lebanon's normal commercial relations were profoundly disrupted. At the same time, the country's standards of education and training, previously high, were severely shaken. The effects of these blows included widespread skill shortages and a backlog in investment in new products, techniques and equipment. Addressing these problems is an essential prerequisite for expanding exports.

A third important problem for manufacturing companies in Lebanon today is the absence of an effective structure for supporting SME development. Economic development resources provided at the national, regional and local levels in advanced industrial states are largely lacking in Lebanon. The financial system at present makes little provision for the needs of small manufacturers. The local consultancy industry is still relatively poorly developed and is anyway largely out of reach of SMEs for reasons of cost.

Nevertheless, manufacturing has grown faster than the economy as a whole since the end of the war. Industry now accounts for approximately twenty per cent of GDP and forty per cent of exports. A total of around 140,000 people were employed in Lebanon's 24,000 or so manufacturing enterprises, according to a recent census. Some 75 per cent of these firms employ less than five people, and less than 100 companies had a staff of more than 100 each. To complicate matters, a large majority of the country's manufacturing firms are family-owned and controlled, and only ten per cent are joint stock companies. In

short, the manufacturing sector is dominated by SMEs, and it is questionable if these can compete regionally and internationally.

A key financial issue facing manufacturing is the uncompetitive nature of the Lebanese banking system and its inability to meet the needs of the industrial sector. The government is now facilitating bank lending to SMEs, but many of these companies still find it difficult to raise capital at an acceptable price. Until this problem is resolved, progress towards professionalising Lebanese industry will continue to be slow.

At present, the institutional basis for an active policy to promote SME development is weak. Government in Lebanon has always played a hands-off role with regard to the economy. The country is, thus, relatively free from the heavy handed government regulation that is common in other parts of the Middle East, but the state is also poorly equipped to actively support business development in partnership with the private sector. There is clearly a role for the government to play in industrial promotion, but what it is exactly remains to be seen. Within the framework of a strong commitment to the free market, the government and organisations representing the private sector must explore the elements of an industrial promotion policy. The trick for the Lebanese now will be to strike a balance between the cross interference in industry characterising some other developing countries, and the old laissez faire policy that left manufacturing to fend for itself.

The Palestinian budget

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

THE ANNUAL 1999 budget of the Palestinian National Authority was presented to the Palestinian Legislative Council this week, six months late. The budget was to have been presented in October 1998 in order to give the council enough time to read and prepare its responses before voting on it. The budget was presented after PLC members threatened to bring down the PNA government in a confidence vote. Ahmad Qoureia (Abu Ala'a) is said to have told the Palestinian leadership that it can't hold off the anger of the legislatures any more and that if the budget wasn't presented he would not be able to attend last Monday's session. The budget — presented by the PNA's minister of finance — was delivered to the budget committee (and not to all the members of the PLC) before it was presented and approved by the Palestinian cabinet.

In presenting the budget, Palestinian Minister of Finance, Zuhdi Nashashibi, told the committee that this year's budget is 10 per cent bigger than last year's. Overall income was listed as 10,030 million shekels (\$2.5 billion), expenses are expected at NIS10,646 million leaving a deficit of NIS 616 million. Nashashibi pointed out that many international commitments have not been honoured and that the PNA is discussing with banks and investors the possibility of issuing bonds to support the PNA.

The PLC's budget committee headed by Dr. Azmi Shu'ibi has been given two weeks to study the budget and present their recommendations. Shu'ibi told me that they will need at least a month. Shu'ibi also told me that unlike previous years when the response was political in nature, they are planning to present a professional response using the help of international budget experts.

A quick look at the budget and discussion with some of leaders of the PLC reveal the direction of this year's budget and on what discussions will centre. Previous questions about undisclosed sources of income will once again be asked. The minister of finance told the legislators that this year's budget is comprehensive and includes all the income to the PNA. The reference here is to income from various monopolies and holding companies set up by the PNA often referred to as the Khaled Slam companies. Income from petrol profits and cigarette taxes

which were not declared previously did appear in this year's budget. But inside sources in the PLC say that there is no other reference to many of the other monopolies including Al Bahr Company and the PNA's share in the Oasis Casino near Jericho.

The absence of these incomes can also be seen in the fact that local income has only risen by \$50 million from last year's budget even though the income from VAT and customs has risen from last year. True the income tax rate was lowered and therefore some income tax revenues decreased, but insiders say that the amount is small and if the previously undisclosed proceeds were disclosed local income should stand much higher.

Of course reviewing budgets is not restricted to declared income but how the existing income will be spent. A major priority for the Palestinian Legislatures will be the issue of civil servant salaries. A new civil service law which was approved by the PLC has not been carried out and wages of government employees is still very low. One idea might be to bring the teachers and other low-income employees up to the new standard approved by the civil service law.

The issue of government hiring will also be discussed. Hires have continued unabated this year despite warning from the legislature. More than 55 per cent of the budget goes to pay government workers whose numbers continue to grow. Nashashibi alluded to this problem when he spoke about the large number of unemployed university graduates who the government finds itself forced to hire in order to reduce the army of unemployed persons.

The 1999 annual budget has some good news. Apparently the \$90 million that were earmarked last year for the office of the president of the PNA were not needed. Less than half of that amount was spent last year and there was no need to budget the same amount this year.

Features

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, April 8-9, 1999

Silicon Wadi: Can Jordan develop an internationally respected and competitive software industry?

The first Middle East MIT alumni conference is due to be held in Jordan later this year. The topic of the conference will be creating knowledge-based industries in the region. Speakers will include world-renowned economist Lester Thurow, author of 'Head to Head' and 'The Future of Capitalism', technology strategist Michael Cusumano, author of 'Microsoft Secrets' and 'Competing on Internet Time', and Kenneth Morse, Managing Director of the MIT Entrepreneurship Centre, who has played a key role in launching several MIT-based startups including 3COM and Aspen Technology.

By Ramzi T. Abdel Jabber

THE SHORT answer is yes! Getting there though requires coordination, planning, and investment over the course of several decades. Many countries have tried to create such an industry. The few that succeed manage to create wealth, provide jobs, and as a result experience tremendous economic growth.

The impetus for this essay was a request by H.E. Dr. Marwan Muasher, Jordan's Ambassador to the U.S., who asked me to put together a small memo on the specifics of how the Government of Jordan can nurture and develop a software industry. He wanted me to highlight, based on my experience, the critical success factors for the creation of software clusters. As I will indicate later on in my article, a large number of world-renowned experts have already figured out what needs to be done a long time ago. To try and summarise their work in a few paragraphs would do injustice to their research efforts and valuable insights. Alternatively, I would like to use this article to focus on why Jordan should consider the development of an internationally competitive software industry, how other countries have approached the challenge, and what Jordan's overall strategy should be, should it decide to take on that challenge.

Why software?

Two main reasons: It is a very attractive industry and more importantly, there is a strategic fit between the requirements for building such an industry and the available or potential resources in Jordan.

The advent of the information age has resulted in an unprecedented demand for software products. As a result, the industry is becoming an increasingly important part of the world economy. In the U.S. alone, the total market size for software and software-related services is estimated at \$108 billion. The total software industry market size outside the U.S. is estimated to reach \$117 billion by 2001. What's encouraging is that prospects for growth are also extremely high. In the U.S., the industry grew 12.5% for the years 1990-1996, nearly 2.5 times the growth of the overall economy. The industry is expected to continue on this steep growth trajectory. Finally, in addition to the large market size and great future prospects, gross margins are very attractive, in many cases reaching 90 per cent!

For countries that are able to take advantage of this phenomenon, the payoffs are impressive.

Creation of an ever-growing number of high paying jobs. By 2001, the industry will employ over 1 million people outside the U.S. Within the U.S., direct employment will also reach 1 million by 2005.

In addition to job creation, the industry will provide a growing stream of tax revenues. In 1996/1997 alone, the software industry and supporting industries contributed over \$28 billion in tax revenues to world governments.

What is also encouraging is that software economics lend themselves to a country such as Jordan:

The highly skilled labour that is required to support such an industry is probably one of Jordan's only resources.

The fact that once developed, the marginal cost of producing an additional copy of a certain software is close to zero facilitates

Jordan's participation, as scale does not become a paramount issue anymore.

The collapse of time and distance as a result of technologies such as the Internet, renders transportation of software very cheap and enables companies to compete irrespective of size and location; thus reducing key barriers that could impede Jordan's entry to the market.

What does it take to get there?

Almost all experts agree that the following main ingredients are required for the creation of a successful software industry: Talent, funding, and supporting infrastructure. The following few paragraphs highlight several success stories that reinforce the need for the above-mentioned ingredients.

Silicon Valley: "The only place on earth not trying to figure out how to become Silicon Valley!"

The most spectacular example of a software industry cluster is Silicon Valley, the strip of land between San Francisco and San Jose. It is the home of such companies as YAHOO!, Netscape, Cisco Systems, Hewlett Packard, Apple, Adobe, 3COM and many others. Entrepreneurial activity in the Valley adds up to 3,500 hi-tech companies on an annual basis.

It taps the talent pool supplied by leading regional universities such as Stanford, Berkeley, and UCLA. Many of today's global giants grew out of Stanford's classrooms (e.g., Sun Microsystems, Silicon Graphics, HP, and Cisco). The Valley attracts one third of the venture capital raised around the world, \$5 billion, to support such entrepreneurial activity. The supporting industries and services are world-class: patent lawyers, hi-tech consultants, advisors, and marketers, PR, and headhunters. The infrastructure is also unparalleled. I have a T-1 Internet connection to my apartment — and it comes with the rent!

India: "Second largest pool of scientific manpower that speaks English and costs less!"

India is another example of a successful software industry cluster. The software industry grew from \$10 million in 1989 to \$2.2 billion in 1999. Software exports have grown at a staggering CAGR of 55 per cent to reach \$1.8 billion. There are over 550 world-class software companies situated in Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi, and the up-and-coming Hyderabad.

India's key success has been the relative abundance of low-cost, highly skilled manpower. Over 160,000 people are currently employed by the industry. India has over 32 engineering colleges and 700 private training institutes teaching computer science courses graduating 100,000 engineers on an annual basis. More importantly, the quality of education at such places as the India Institute of Technology (IIT) and the India Institute of Science (IIS) is at a par with that of the major leading technology universities worldwide.

Interestingly enough, the infrastructure is very poor. I was shocked to learn, during my trip last summer to Bangalore, India's high-tech capital, that electric blackouts are a daily norm that last 3-5 hours. The government has been smart enough to realise the importance of the supporting infrastructure and hence has allowed companies such as Satyam, Infosys, WIPRO, and Tata Infotech to bypass the local infrastructure by building

their own satellite link ups. Some of these companies have even gone a step further by building other complimentary services. One of the companies I visited, Satyam, had a 600-acre campus with power generators, satellites, restaurants, health clubs, theatre, housing, and even an animal sanctuary — things I only saw at large U.S. software developers.

Local governments in India have played and continue to play a pivotal role in encouraging the industry. The Governor of Hyderabad has made several trips to Microsoft and other technology leaders to encourage cooperation and investment. In fact, companies such as Motorola, IBM, Texas Instruments, Digital, and Sun Microsystems have set up their own shops. The government has set up several software technology parks where import duties and corporate taxes are exempt for five years. Companies within these parks are exempt from import duties and corporate taxes for the first five years of operations. The parks offer centralised computing facilities and high-speed data communication links. Moreover, profits derived from software exports are 100 per cent tax-free.

Israel: "Silicon Valley's closest rival" Whereas the U.S. has 18 engineers/10,000 people, Israel has 135! Israel has the third largest number of companies listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange, only the U.S. and Canada. It is the home to some 2000 high-tech firms. Many companies such as Sun, IBM, Motorola, HP, Silicon Graphics, and others have invested in Israel through subsidiaries, research centres, venture capital funds, or acquisition of Israeli companies. Intel developed its MMX chip and has three factories in Israel.

Israel's hi-tech exports amounted to \$5.7 billion in 1997 (33 per cent of total exports). Approximately 185,000 people are employed in the hi-tech sector.

In addition to the talent pool, Israel has the funding. Currently, 54 venture capital firms operate in Israel with total funds raised between 1991-1997 of \$1.5 billion. Between 1992-1997, Israeli companies raised \$3.5 billion on Wall Street.

In a recent study by the Council on Competitiveness, Israel, along with Taiwan and Singapore, was identified as a country that has made substantial investments in upgrading its innovative capacity and will soon be on a par with 2nd tier OECD countries.

Where does Jordan fit?

Jordan's 85% literacy rate, 33,000 engineers/1,000 people, 88 telephone lines/1,000 people, and 13 private and 7 public universities puts it at a clearly better starting point than India with its 50 per cent literacy rate and \$350 per capita income. So what should Jordan's strategic positioning be vis-a-vis other countries?

To develop a sustainable, high value-added software industry, Jordan's strategy should be executed in two phases. The first phase is geared towards catching up with the rest of the software industry and the second targets getting ahead.

Focus on the basics to catch up!

I highlighted the basics earlier: Nurturing talent by strengthening academic institutions and encouraging research and development, facilitating financial funding by providing incentives for venture

capital, relentlessly improving the supporting infrastructure, and developing specific government policies geared towards encouraging the sector. We have got to execute on all fronts if we want to even have a chance at a successful and thriving software industry.

Jordan's initial market entry strategy should rely on its labour cost advantage, which is on a par with that of India. Dedicated software development centres and off site support centres could be the key entry mechanisms. At the initial stages, companies could focus on low value add software development — 'me too' products and services — that are faster, better, and cheaper. The revenue influx from such activities would enable those companies to strengthen R&D and undertake more value add work. This is pretty much India's story between 1980-1990. Now, India has large companies with the size, credibility, market reach, and knowledge to compete against the Microsofts of the world.

If I were to give six key recommendations to companies and to Jordan's government during the initial catch up phase, they would be:

Focus, Focus, Focus — Due to the limited market for software products in Jordan, most companies end up being everything to everyone. To compete in the more competitive, specialised global marketplace, our software industry should focus initially on several key areas just like India did with the Y2K and the euro conversion. The focus could be certain industry vertical such as banking or education for example.

Target outside markets — Jordan would need to go immediately to other markets due to the fact that local demand for software is relatively minuscule. Although the ultimate market would be the U.S. and other major industrialised countries, Gulf states and Israel could serve as the starting point.

Buy your first large customer — As Kenneth Morse, Managing Director of MIT's Entrepreneurship Centre, always tells me: you have to buy your first big customer, meaning that you have to give them a deal that they can't refuse. Once you have contracted work from a company such as Intel or HP, it becomes much easier to sell your products and services to other firms. It becomes also easier to attract and retain talent.

Celebrate success stories — Success stories draw talent, give credibility vis-a-vis customers, and attracts venture capital. Once we have a company or two that compete internationally, we've got to make sure that everyone knows about them. Yahoo! now valued at \$35 billion, was created by two Stanford MBAs out of a room with less than \$1,000. Mirabilis! ICQ, started by a couple of 25 year-old Israelis was acquired by AOL for \$400 million, InfoSys — India software development company doubled its share price in the first couple of hours of trading on the Nasdaq, and the list goes on. The world loves to hear such mega success stories.

Overcome stereotypes — when you talk to anyone in the hi-tech industry about creating a software cluster in Jordan, two issues surface: Stability and the fact that Jordan is just not known for technological innovation. An industry association or the government can overcome both issues with the assistance of specialised PR companies, spin-doctors, who

can construct credible, fact-based storylines to educate potential customers/investors. Of course good work usually speaks for itself.

Build marketing joint ventures — Packaging and marketing products is a different but core capability required to successfully compete in the industry. Companies should initially build joint ventures to market their products. Once they have reached a large enough size, they could start their own direct channels.

Leverage the intangibles

The second step is really getting ahead in certain areas. That is something that while India is currently struggling with, Israel has managed to excel at. Very specialised niches such as Internet security, or custom chip design are at the core of Israel's software industry.

Differentiation and innovation are the key to sustaining a competitive advantage and to sustaining a higher wage level and living standard. As any person with an economic background would know, differentiation enables companies to extract monopoly rents. There will always be someone who does it cheaper, better, faster. The name of the game is to always be a moving target.

If you thought catching up is challenging, getting ahead is a much harder undertaking that requires focus on intangibles. The following are my recommendations for tackling the challenge:

Encourage entrepreneurship and nurture creativity and innovation throughout the educational system. The effects of such policies are unbelievable. According to a 1997 BankBoston study, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has spawned over 4000 companies (e.g., Infoseek, Lotus Development, Raytheon, Digital, and Firefly) employing over 1 million people and accounting for the world's 24th largest economy (\$116 billion). Another study indicates that half of Silicon Valley's revenue comes from Stanford-seeded companies.

Consolidate, encourage and fund isolated cases of excellence. Jordan has a large number of extremely qualified individuals both inside and outside the country. Educational programs such as the Jubilee School should be more common. There should also be constant networking with the Jordanian talent pool working in hi-tech worldwide.

Nurture a culture that is risk-taking, improve our work ethic and working environment, invest in training and upgrading of skills, and encourage the development of business networks worldwide.

Strengthen the innovative capacity of Jordan by encouraging both public and private investments in basic sciences, the fundamental foundation for innovation and differentiation.

Of course all of the above recommendations should be coupled with several government policies such as the strengthening of patent and copyright laws, the establishment of technology parks and a software development promotion body.

Where do we go from here?

Numerous cities and countries have named themselves Silicon something (e.g., Silicon Island (Taiwan), Silicon Plateau (Bangalore), Silicon Alley (New York), Silicon Fern (Cambridge, U.K.) and attempted to copy the Valley's success

story. If the recipe for success (i.e., talent, funding, infrastructure, etc.) is out there, one might wonder why many of those countries have failed to create such an industry? The answer is twofold:

Those factors are only prerequisites to success. You've got to have them to be in the game. However, having them does not necessarily mean that you will win. This is why it is an imperative for Jordan to execute against all major areas (talent, funding, infrastructure, supporting products/services, and government regulation) as they are very interdependent.

It takes a long time to reap the benefits of executing against those factors. Many governments worldwide lose sight of that and hence fail. The March 11, 1999 study by the Council on Competitiveness on innovation indicates that investments in innovative capacity made by Scandinavian countries in the mid to late 80's will render Finland, Sweden, and Denmark the new international innovation centres by 2005. Hence, we have to articulate a long-term vision that is clearly communicated and executed against by successive governments. Creating a cluster in Jordan will probably take several decades.

Now that we are all fired up and ready to go out and create our own miracle, we should start by thinking of a name — Silicon 'Wadi'? Pretty good but unfortunately already taken by Israel. Maybe Silicon 'Jabal' or 'Sahel'!

The writer works with McKinsey & Company's Silicon Valley Office in Palo Alto, CA. He has served on several worldwide, technology strategy client engagements. Abdel Jabber also worked with Andersen Consulting, Booz Allen & Hamilton, and is a Partner and Manager of Business/Product Development at Integrated Business Solutions, an IT start up in Jordan. He holds an MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management, with a specialisation in the fields of information technology, business strategy, and entrepreneurship.

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Cars of the future closer with fuel cell advances

By Martha Hindes
Agence France Presse

FUTURISTS HAVE long envisioned high performance, whisper-silent vehicles that would run on renewable fuels and leave little pollution in their wake.

That dream is likely to become a reality in about five years, auto industry insiders say, with the rapid progress in developing revolutionary new "fuel cells" to power the vehicles of tomorrow.

A fuel cell vehicle is powered by electricity manufactured on board the auto, instead of being stored in a weighty battery as in an electric car.

There will be far less vibration and far lower noise levels in a fuel cell-powered vehicle than one powered by today's internal combustion engine, said Paul Lancaster, vice president with Ballard Power Systems of Vancouver, Canada, a company involved in fuel cell development.

"People should be pleasantly surprised" with the new technology, he

said.

Lancaster's company is involved in a developmental venture with Ford and DaimlerChrysler called Ecostar, and provides the fuel cells and support components for those companies. His company also makes systems for Honda, Nissan and General Motors.

"Fuel cells are where the internal combustion engine was at the turn of the century," said Lancaster.

Explaining the difference between an internal combustion engine and the new engines is a challenge because there's no comparison for a fuel cell.

"Everybody knows what's under the hood of a car with an internal combustion engine," such as those on the road today, Lancaster said.

A fuel cell, by contrast, looks something like a stack of compact disks used for recordings or computer software.

Instead of burning fuel like internal combustion engines and emitting pollutants, fuel cells force a chemical change that produces electricity as it passes through a special filter. What

remains after the process is only carbon dioxide and water vapour.

The most promising fuel for powering fuel cells is likely to be methanol, a liquid fuel, according to Ford Motor Company spokeswoman Sara Tatichio.

Methanol, sometimes called wood alcohol, can be manufactured from natural gas or from biological sources, and is easier to convert into electricity-producing hydrogen than other fuels, Lancaster said.

Fuel cells can also be fuelled by gasoline, natural gas or ethanol made from corn. Most developmental vehicles are fuelled by hydrogen.

In January, Ford introduced its fuel cell powered P2000, a Taurus-sized experimental vehicle. And on Wednesday, DaimlerChrysler showed off its latest fuel cell vehicle, the NECAR4 — from New Electric Car — which could lead to production cars by 2004.

The Ford and DaimlerChrysler vehicles both have close to a 300-mile driving range on a tank of fuel. Fuel

cell vehicles also have quick acceleration, so there is no loss in driving performance.

One major hurdle is finding a way to lower the cost of fuel cells so they are comparable to today's internal combustion engines.

What is needed now are cheaper materials, manufacturing shortcuts, improved designs, fine-tuned engineering and the ability to produce fuel cells in volume. A fuel cell powerplant would also need to match the expected 322,000 kilometre life of a present day engine averaging 64 kilometres an hour, he said.

Vehicle makers have solved the size problem and now can put fuel cells in compact cars. And without a large engine under the hood, designers should have more freedom to create futuristic styles.

But there probably will not be transmissions like those in present day vehicles, unless auto makers design them back into vehicles for those who like the feel or action of shifting gears.

Of Pentiums and fairy tales

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE LAST decade has brought dramatic improvement in terms of computer awareness among users from all walks of life and of all ages, especially since the subject has become an integral part of schools curricula. And yet, even today at the threshold of the 21st century, we can see people crediting the machine with almost supernatural or irrational power.

Some still believe that computers can predict the future for instance.

Or have emotions, or be handled as simply as say a toaster. Others want us to believe unbelievable stories about what computers can do or the way they work.

Last week, ITV 2 broadcast a movie called "Panic in the Skies". Just after take off, the captain of a passenger airliner and his assistant are killed by a thunderbolt. The aircraft then flies on automatic pilot but follows an erratic path and seems doomed for a major catastrophe until the heroic air hostess (Kate Jackson), with a little help from two smart passengers, saves the situation with a spectacular emergency landing.

The subject itself has been overused and abused. But the most pitiful aspect of the movie is when one of the two smart passengers takes his notebook computer and connects it to the aircraft's damaged system. He then manages to bypass the faulty computer and take partial control of the plane, via the notebook.

Now, how many people, schoolchildren included, can swallow that? From both the hardware and the software points of view, connecting a notebook to the computer of a Jumbo doesn't make sense. The electrical levels are different and the operating systems are light years away from one another. Of course, all computers use the same internal logic, but they sometimes talk different languages.

In simpler and more down-to-earth (literally) situations, there are still people who try to impress newcomers to the world of personal computing by telling them fairy tales about what the Internet can do for example. Some have been warned that their PC could catch a virus via the Internet even when it's completely shut off! Others have been told that they'll be able to "transmit" pieces of hardware via modems — sic.

However amazing it may be, technological progress will always remain within the boundaries of logic. Computers will certainly continue to amaze us, but black magic is not on the agenda.

For comments or suggestions, Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaudio@nets.com.jo

chip talk



Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Ministry of Planning documents economic 'achievements' in statistical booklet

**** ACCORDING TO** a statistical booklet entitled Jordan: Economic Overview issued by the Ministry of Planning, government spending as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) was 35.7 per cent in 1997, the lowest rate since 1993 when the rate was 37.8 per cent. Also, foreign debt as a percentage of GDP declined to 92.5 per cent which is the lowest rate since the beginning of the 90s.

The booklet described the above figures as good indicators of the Jordanian economy in addition to the inflation rate which in 1997 dropped to three per cent compared to 6.5 per cent in 1996. Financially, the gross foreign assets at the Central Bank of Jordan increased to \$3,606 million, the highest amount since the early 90s. "In general, the gross national savings continued to rise steadily since the early 90s to reach 28.7 per cent of the GDP in 1997 compared to 11.9 per cent in 1990," the booklet said.

Noting that the economic indicators as a whole were positive, the booklet indicated that the real growth in GDP in 1997 was 2.20 per cent compared to less than one per cent in 1996. The highest rate of real growth achieved since the early 90s was posted in 1992 when it stood at 16.1 per cent. The GDP per capita at current prices amounted to \$1,532.4 in 1992. The domestic investments were

highlighted for contributing 28.4 per cent of the GDP in 1997 whereas public and private consumption accounted for 25 per cent and 69.5 per cent respectively. "This gross consumption continued to represent the main driving force behind the growth in GDP at current prices in 1997 while the deficit in the trade balance contributed negatively in the GDP as it reached 22.9 per cent," the booklet said.

The Ministry of Planning put the 1997 unemployment rate at 15.1 per cent of the total workforce noting that the highest jobless rate during the 90s was 19.2 per cent in 1993 and the lowest of 14 per cent was in 1996. At 18.5 per cent, the public administration was the highest employing sector followed by commercial activities, hotels and restaurants which employed 18.3 per cent of the workforce. Education and health ranked in third place as they took 16.2 per cent of the workers.

The remaining workforce were spread in the mining and industry (13.8 per cent), transport, storage and communications (8.5 per cent), agriculture (6.7 per cent), construction (6.7 per cent), financing and real estate (4.6 per cent), water, electricity and gas (two per cent) and the rest of 4.6 per cent in other sectors (AI Ra'i).

Mobinil chief sees big potential in Egypt

CAIRO (R) — The head of Mobinil, Egypt's leading mobile phone company, said Wednesday his firm had exceeded all its financial targets in its drive to exploit the "tremendous potential" of the local market.

"In the Middle East, particularly, people are very communicative," Osman Sultan, president and chief executive of the Egyptian Company for Mobile Services, better known by its trade name Mobinil, said in an interview on Wednesday.

"While the worldwide average for incoming and outgoing mobile phone traffic per subscriber is around 150 minutes per subscriber per month, the current average for Mobinil is 550,"

Sultan said it was clear Egypt had "tremendous potential for

telecommunications in general, and mobile specifically."

He said Mobinil, which recently reported its first financial results, has exceeded all its internal goals in terms of number of subscribers, network size and "roaming" agreements for international calls.

"What is very important is that we have delivered everything we promised," Sultan said, stressing the need to build confidence and strong relations with subscribers.

Mobinil posted a net loss of 163 million pounds (\$47.5 million) for the period from May 21 to Dec. 31, 1998, compared to a budgeted net loss of 233 million pounds.

The company said it had achieved positive earnings of 28 million pounds before inter-

est, tax, depreciation and amortisation versus a targeted loss of 70 million.

Revenue of 418 million pounds had also exceeded its company targets for the period, Sultan told Reuters.

He said Mobinil had only a limited number of subscribers to its roaming service, but saw it as a future growth area. Mustafa Abdul Wadoud, Mobinil's director of business development, said the share price of the company reflected its achievements since it was floated in February 1998.

The share has doubled in value this year and some brokers forecast it will break resistance at 40 pounds to achieve new closing highs this month when the market gets back into full swing after a string of Muslim and Christian hol-

days. Mobinil, whose international partners are Motorola Inc. and France Telecom, had a head start of several months in its operations over competitor Misfone, also known as Click GSM.

Asked if he believed Mobinil would retain its leading market position, Sultan, who was formerly vice-president for business development in charge of Middle East markets at France Telecom, uttered a firm "yes."

He said Mobinil's own surveys indicate that the company has achieved tremendous brand recognition after an energetic marketing campaign over the past 10 months, marked by new tariff offers and the launch of a pre-paid card service.

Mobinil's licensing agreement obliges it to cover 85 per cent of Egypt's populated areas by April 2002. Sultan said the firm would easily reach that target by the end of this year and all populated areas should be covered by Mobinil's network by the first half of 2000.

The number of subscribers currently stands at 240,000, up from 82,000 in May, 1998, he said. A sector analyst said Misfone had 70,000 subscribers by mid-March.

Demand is strong and for the moment needs no stimulation from cuts in the start-up fee or prices, Sultan said. Mobinil wants to ensure that quality and services to existing subscribers do not suffer from too rapid an expansion. But Sultan said fees would fall progressively in future.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Circumstances that seem beyond your control could force you to take action. That's what it feels like, anyway. Actually, you're the one who got yourself into this position, and you're the only one who can get yourself out. You won't do that by locking horns with another stubborn person. Learn what he's trying to teach you, and use it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you're travelling today, take care. There will be delays, and they're not all your fault. Somebody else's impatience could cause you to get off schedule. If you absolutely have to get there on time, you'd better start early.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The important thing to remember today is that you need to be practical. It'll be a lot more fun to be wildly impetuous, but that's not going to work out anywhere near as well for you. It'll be a lot more fun for a little while, but you could end up flat broke.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) There's almost too much opportunity to suit you today. You might feel overwhelmed. Don't try to manage it all by yourself. You need a good partner with skills complementing your own. Nurture one.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) Ignore a friend who's trying to talk you into playing hooky. Today it's really not a good idea. The workload is pretty intense, and you sure are looking for a break, but look ahead just a little further. This weekend will be much better for travel and for being with friends. Right now, concentrate on the job at hand.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Somebody's else's emergency could get in the way of your plans for today. If it weren't for that, everything would be tranquil, easy and maybe even a little boring. Not much chance of that happening, though. You'll be on your toes most of the day. Plan your date for tomorrow, instead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Two very enthusiastic people could clash mightily today, but you're not afraid. You go right into the middle of the battle armed only with your wit and charming smile. You might charm them both into seeing things differently, too, but it might take a little longer than you expected. Better pack a lunch.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're learning quickly today, and that's a good thing, because you need to learn as fast as you can to keep up with a demanding schedule. There's also a demanding person who's about to drive you crazy. While you're practising your talents, also practice controlling of your temper. It'll give you the edge that could make all the difference.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you run into the same old criticism today, relax. Instead of fighting back, look to see what you could give up. Not your point of view, of course, by maybe the tension in your body. Your smile is so contagious, the others will forget what they were arguing about.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Looks like good things are coming your way eventually. It may not seem like that right now, however. Instead of resisting a change that seems imminent, see if you can manage it instead. Manage to make it work out in your favour, that is.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You're in a bit of a crunch today, most likely. Looks like there's a logjam. Somebody's yapping at you to move more quickly, but that might not be possible, unless you try something different. Go for it.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Friends and loved ones may be kind of hard to tell apart today. Several people you know fit into both categories. That's good, because you can have plenty of support to get through a tough assignment. Relax and concentrate, and you'll do fine.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Managed care new U.S. export to Latin America

BOSTON (R) — Managed health care companies, having saturated the U.S. market, are targeting Latin America and researchers report in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine the poor may suffer from the trend.

"Given the mixed effects of managed care in the United States, the outlook for the people of Latin America is not necessarily favourable," said the research team, led by Karen Stocker, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico.

U.S. health care firms are expanding into Latin America because domestic markets are tight, overseas governments' health care budgets can be tapped, and the International Monetary Fund encourages governments to switch to managed care to save costs. Stocker's team said.

But there are signs that managed health care organizations, are reaping profits by just enrolling healthier people, leaving sicker people with less access to care, and requiring hefty co-payments that limit care to all, the team said.

They cited Chile as a prime example. There, social security and health care funds are given to private managed care companies, some of which have been bought by multinational insurance companies.

While 8.9 per cent of the population is elderly, only 3.2 per cent of the insurance company customers are age 60 and older, which means the managed care customers tend to be healthier than the general population.

Co-payments are high and represent nine per cent of the health care firms' income. Some 24 per cent of Chilean patients who are enrolled in managed health care organizations use public hospitals because they are unable to afford the co-payments.

In Argentina and Brazil public hospitals are so strapped for cash they turn away 30 to 40 per cent of indigent patients seeking government-sponsored care, the researchers said.

"As for profit, managed care organizations have taken over the administration of public institutions, increased administrative costs have diverted funds from clinical services," the stocker group said.

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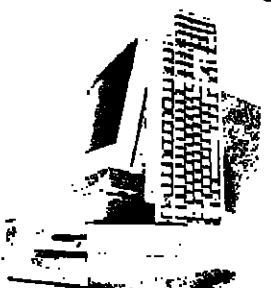
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Lazio on course for Italian league and Cup Winners Cup

PARIS (AFP) — Italy's Lazio, with only three trophies in their history, are timing their end of season well with a possible double of European Cup Winners Cup and Italian league title still on the cards.

Lazio travel to Russian outfit Lokomotiv Moscow, four-time domestic cup winners, as major favourites in their Cup Winners Cup semifinal first leg tie on Thursday.

Lazio are now six points clear in Italy and unbeaten in 17 matches, following a 0-0 draw with AC Milan at the weekend, with just seven matches left.

Chile's Marcelo Salas has been doing most of the damage for Lazio with 13 goals this season, mainly in partnership with Christian Vieri, who joined them earlier in the season after falling out with Arrigo Sacchi at Atletico Madrid.

A win for Lazio in the Cup Winners Cup — holders Chelsea meet Real Mallorca in the other semifinal — would go a long way to make up for their disappointment in losing to Inter Milan in last year's UEFA Cup final in Paris.

Lazio's other trophies came in last year's Italian Cup final, another cup win in 1958 and their sole

league Italian title in 1974.

Lokomotiv Moscow, however, have an outside chance with players of the quality of sweeper Igor Chugainov and playmaker Yevgeny Kharlachyov along with the tournament's leading scorer Zaza Dzhanelashvili, who notched a hat-trick in the quarterfinal second leg match with Israeli outfit Maccabi Haifa.

Chelsea are at home to Mallorca and manager Gianluca Vialli knows his side must show the same mental toughness that saw them through against Charlton at the weekend.

"It is difficult physically and mentally playing in Europe," said Vialli.

"You have to take all the physical pressure and emotionally it takes a lot out of you. But so far so good," he added.

The win over Charlton came at a ground where Chelsea had not left with the points since 1981 and there were many encouraging aspects, not least Albert Ferrer's form on the right flank and the impact made by Uruguayan playmaker Gustavo Poyet when he appeared as a substitute after several months out through injury.

Playing his third game inside a week following international duty

with France, Marcel Desailly produced a masterful defensive performance which have been lacking in recent weeks.

Mallorca, who have topped the league in Spain, are now in sixth spot after goals from Argentina's Leonardo Biagini and Dani earned them a 2-0 victory at Villarreal on Sunday ending a poor run which had seen them lose their league lead.

They have only conceded 21 goals in 28 games and it is this miserly record of letting in goals which has earned them so much success. Argentina's international keeper Carlos Roa must take much of the credit, bringing interest from many top clubs including Manchester United.

However, during training this week, Roa said it was defending in all areas of the pitch which has earned them success. "No team can outrun us," he said. "We are a disciplined, solid side who all work for each other. I may not be letting many goals in, but it's all down to the hard work done by the whole team." Much of Roa's praise must surely be going to the defence of Lauren, Xavier Olaizola, Marcelino, and 34-year-old veteran Miguel Soler.

Bergkamp fires fiery Gunners to within a point of United

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal's Dutch playmaker Dennis Bergkamp fired the only goal of an ill-tempered Premiership encounter on Tuesday with relegation threatened Blackburn Rovers — which saw both sides reduced to 10-men.

Bergkamp's 14th goal of the season, his ninth in the Premiership, lifted the reigning champions to within a point of leaders and their opponents in Sunday's FA Cup semi-finals Manchester United — although the latter have a game in hand — while Blackburn remain fourth from the bottom.

In the night's other match Leicester City came from two goals down to draw 2-2 with fast fading early Premiership pacesetters Aston Villa, only their third point from a possible last 30.

Bergkamp opened the scoring in the 42nd minute hitting home with a superb leftfooted shot after his rightfooted freekick had rebounded off the wall giving "keeper John Filan no chance.

Blackburn, who were the last team to take maximum points at Highbury in December 1997, looked to have gained the upper hand when Arsenal defender Martin Keown was sent off for a second bookable offence.

Keown, who received his second red card and Arsenal's ninth of the season, displayed a marked lack of maturity for such an experienced player when he slammed his arm into Sutton's face in the second-half.

Bergkamp should have made it 2-0 when he won a penalty after being brought down by Keith Gillespie, who also received his marching orders, but Filan got down well to save.

Villa took the lead in only the second minute against the League Cup finalists when Lee Hendrie scored after Matt Elliott fell over in the penalty area.

The demoralised former Premiership leaders looked set for their first win in 11 matches when Julian Joachim scored from close range against his former club after Ian Taylor had flicked on from the near post.

However, Welsh international Robbie Savage, who formerly played in the Manchester United youth team that produced Paul Scholes, the Neville brothers and Nicky Butt, pulled one back with a curling 25 yard shot after beating the offside trap.

Leicester completed their superb recovery when evergreen veteran Tony Cottee headed home from Steve Guppy's cross.



Parma's Enrico Chiesa (L), who scored the two first goals for his team, goes with the ball as he is challenged by Atletico Madrid's Roberto Fresnedoso (C) and Vladimir Jugovic during their UEFA Cup semifinal first leg at the "Vicente Calderon" stadium in Madrid. Parma won 3-1 (AFP photo)

Italian clubs close in on UEFA Cup final showdown

PARIS (AFP) — Italian clubs Parma and Bologna are on course for a meeting in the UEFA Cup final after the semi-final first legs played Tuesday night.

But while Parma could be forgiven for booking their tickets in advance to the May showpiece after a 3-1 triumph at Atletico Madrid, Bologna know they still have a lot to do following their goalless draw in Marseille.

Parma were full value for their win in Atletico with the lion's share of the credit due to the lethal strike partnership of Enrico Chiesa and Hernan Crespo.

Italian international Chiesa owed his first goal, after 13 minutes, to Argentinian midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron, who did all the spade work.

Veron surged down the middle of the field, before feeding Chiesa on his right.

The diminutive Italian international beat Francisco Molina with a delicate chip when the goalkeeper was clearly expecting a cross.

But the Spaniards hit back after 21 minutes when Parma's French World Cup-winning defender Lilian Thuram was adjudged to have fouled striker Jose Mari.

Brazilian playmaker Juninho made no mistake from the penalty spot.

Once more Veron was the instigator when Chiesa made it 2-1 five minutes before the interval.

The shaven-headed midfielder's corner was headed by Chiesa against the bar but he pounced on the rebound, lashing it into the roof of the net.

Crespo got in on the act after 61 minutes.

Parma's Stefano Fiore hopelessly mislaid his shot which spun straight across the area but Argentinian Crespo's first-time flick went straight through Molina's legs.

Atletico could have kept the tie alive after 73 minutes when Thuram was again ruled to have impeded Jose Mari.

But this time Italian international goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was equal to Juninho's spotkick. The former Middlesbrough man

was whistled every time he touched the ball subsequently.

New Atletico coach Raddy Antic will have to do without Yugoslav compatriot Vladimir Jugovic, suspended for the second leg in Italy after he was cautioned.

Meanwhile, a determined Bologna battled hard for a 0-0 draw in their UEFA Cup semi-final first leg match against French title contenders Marseille.

The Italians, a mere Serie C side four years ago and qualified through the Intertoto Cup, looked the better side in the first half although, roared on by the 60,000 Stade Velodrome crowd, Marseille had most of the play after the break.

Bologna made a superb start and veteran Davide Fontolan twice failed to test Marseille goalkeeper Stephane Porato when well placed.

But the French side, too, had their opportunities, notably when Bologna goalkeeper Francesco Antonioli spilled the ball to Christophe Dugary who was caught in two minds six yards out and instead of shooting just lobbed the ball harmlessly into the air.

Again the Italians pushed forward and from a freekick Giuseppe Signori missed the target against Porato, who admits his shaven-head and black short-sleeved shirt is modelled on the man he understudies in the French national side, Fabien Barthez.

Marseille striker Florian Maurice then squandered the best chance of the half. He worked a delightful one-two with Italian team-mate Fabrizio Ravanelli, but screwed his left-foot shot wide with only Antonioli to beat.

Almost immediately Bologna's Swedish midfielder Klas Inngesson had a deflected angled shot tipped round the post by Porato for a corner.

At the other end Robert Pires and Ravanelli fired shots over the bar, before another Italy-based Swede Kennet Andersson had his goal-bound header deflected behind as Porato's goal continued to lead a charmed life.

It was a frenetic pace and the game was only half an hour old.

Then Porato, who has proved prone to the occasional bungle in Europe this year, almost gifted the lead to Bologna.

He fumbled a harmless looking ball but experienced campaigner Laurent Blanc, a key member of France's World Cup-winning squad, was on hand to clear the danger with Anderson looking to get a decisive touch.

Marseille forced a series of corners just before the break but the stalemate was unbroken at half-time.

The second-half was an altogether more scrappy affair with both sides huffing and puffing but failing to produce much fluent football.

Ravanelli twice had opportunities from freekicks, but his first was an easy save for Antonioli and the second was charged down by the Bologna wall who then broke only for Signori, whose participation had been threatened by a knee injury, to squander possession.

The quality of passing began to deteriorate with even the normally immaculate Blanc needlessly conceding possession twice.

Marseille boss Roland Courbis tried to shake things up with the introduction of Edson da Silva for Dugary, who had another disappointing game.

Then Ravanelli squandered the best opportunity of the second period when his sidefooted shot was deflected past the post from point blank range.

Porato scrambled the ball to safety from a Signori shot and then at the other end Maurice went for a spectacular overhead shot after good play from Pires but only succeeded in hitting the ball up into orbit.

Frederic Brando wasted one more chance for the hosts, heading wide after a William Gallas cross.

It left the French side with a lot of work to do in Italy in a fortnight although they will be consoled by the fact they did not concede an away goal.

Canadian qualifier ends Venus Williams' winning streak

AMELIA ISLAND (AFP) — Sonya Jeyaseelan — aided by a slow clay court — brought Venus Williams' winning streak to a screeching halt in the second round of the WTA Tour event here Tuesday.

Williams, winner of two straight hardcourt tournaments at Oklahoma City and at the prestigious Lipton Championships at Key Biscayne, was stunned 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) by the Canadian qualifier.

Williams, who entered her first clay-court tournament of the year having lost just one of her previous 14 matches, saw her power neutralised on the slower surface.

Last year, Williams

played just two events on clay, losing to Martina Hingis in the final of the Italian Open and again in the quarter-finals of the French Open.

Top-seeded American Lindsay Davenport showed no ill effects from an injured wrist, defeating Tina Pisknik of Slovenia 7-5, 6-3.

Davenport's strained left wrist forced her to default a quarter-final match to Steffi Graf at the Lipton Championships and pull out of last week's Family Circle Cup at Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The 1997 champion here, Davenport has not reached a final since winning the Sydney International in



Monica Seles

January. Second seed Monica Seles celebrated her naming to the United States Fed Cup team with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Kvetla Hrdlickova of the Czech Republic.

Seles, who reached the finals of the French Open last year, fired four aces and won 18 of 26 points on her first serve.

In other featured second-round matches, sixth seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland

crushed South Africa's Jessica Steek 6-1, 6-1, and eighth seed Barbara Schett of Austria dispatched Christina Papadaki of Greece 6-3, 6-3.

Defending champion and fourth seed Mary Pierce of France will make her first appearance on clay this season when she faces Catalina Cristea of Romania in a second-round match.

CAMPAIGN FOR AID TO THE KOSOVO ALBANIAN REFUGEES

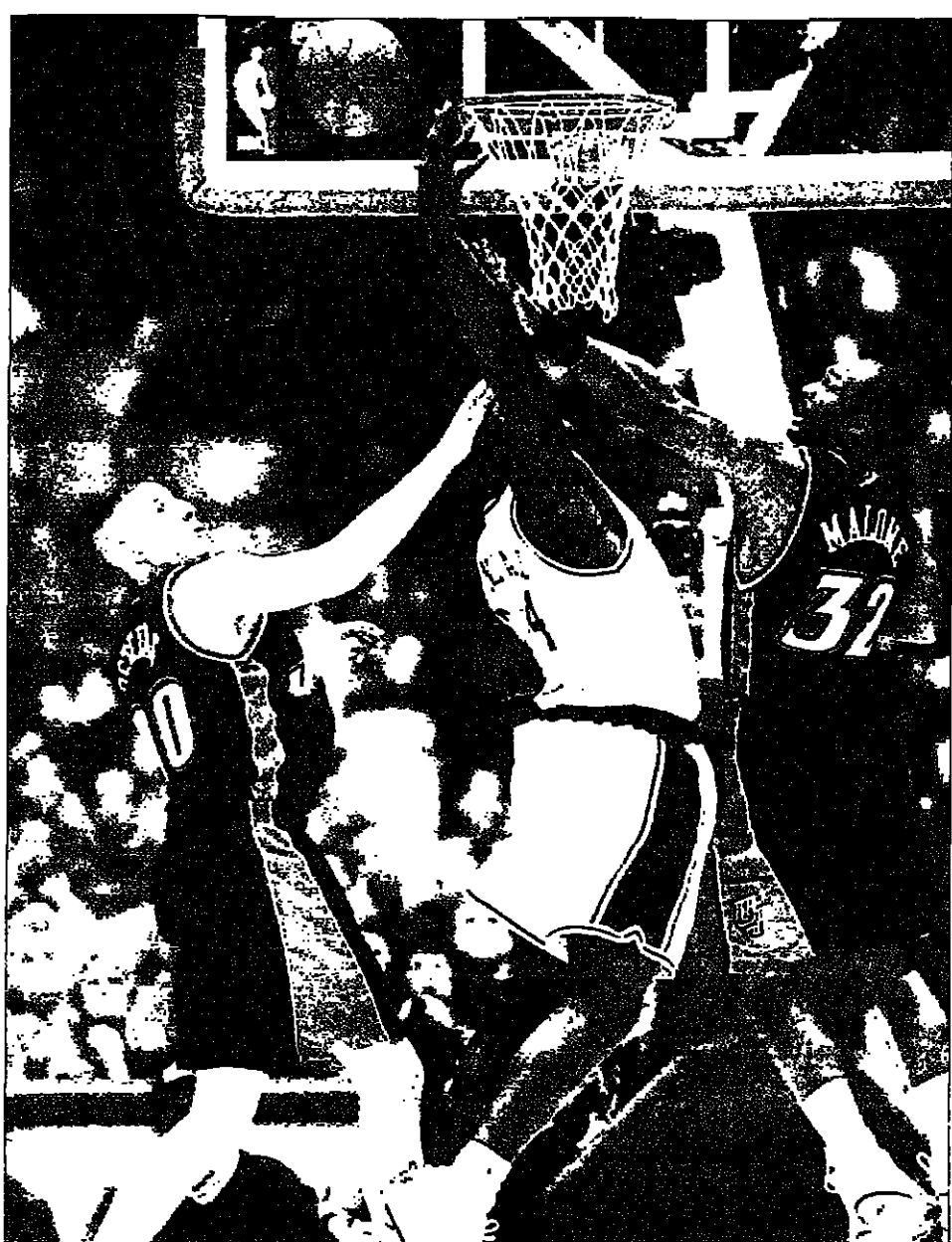
The Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA) in Jordan announces its campaign aimed at collecting donations and in-kind contributions to assist the Kosovo Albanian refugees.

The in-kind contributions are limited to blankets and clothing items of all sizes. The Young Muslim Women's Association appeals to your generosity to support this campaign and its representatives will start receiving donations and contributions as of Wednesday, April 7th 1999 at the Princess Sarvath Community College (PSCC) between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. daily. Receipts are provided for income tax exemption purposes. Packages should be labelled indicating kind and size of clothes.

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.



Utah Jazz Greg Ostertag (L) looks on as Los Angeles Lakers Shaquille O'Neal (C) is denied the basket by teammate Karl Malone (R) at The Great Western Forum in Inglewood, CA (AFP photo)

Iverson plays all but two minutes in win over Bucks

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Allen Iverson ignored his much-publicised thigh bruise, quit the sick bay — or was it the doghouse? — and played all but two minutes, scoring 27 points to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 95-87 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Tuesday.

Iverson was benched for the second quarter of Friday's loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers, apparently for swearing at coach Larry Brown over the amount of time he was kept on the bench, although both later said the quicksilver guard was held out simply because of his nagging injury.

He did not play in the second half or in Sunday's loss at Toronto.

But on Tuesday, Iverson did not come out of the game until he came up limping with 9:38 remaining. He sat for less than two minutes before returning and scored just one point in the final period.

"I said I was going to sit out until my leg got better, but it's not going to get any better," said Iverson. "If I have to sit out, it's going to have to be three weeks. So I just play hurt if I can help my team." he added.

The NBA's leading scorer did not display his usual expressiveness, but was enough of a factor to open the floor for his teammates.

Philadelphia (17-16) won for just the second time in seven games and remained in the thick of the Eastern Conference playoff race. Four teams battling for the final two spots are one game apart.

In Inglewood, California, it was a bad day for Dennis Rodman. Carmel Electra left and Karl Malone showed up.

Hours after Rodman's wife filed for divorce, Malone lit up the Laker forward for 30 points on 12-of-12 shooting as the Utah Jazz outclassed Los Angeles 106-93.

Malone also grabbed 10 rebounds and handed out five assists as Utah won at the Great Western Forum for the second time this season.

In Washington, in a meeting of teams guided by interim coaches, Don Casey's New Jersey Nets held Jim Brevelli's Wizards scoreless for more than three minutes down the stretch of a 97-93 victory, their season-high fourth straight triumph.

In New York, Darrell Armstrong scored 11 of his 17 points in the fourth quarter and Penny Hardaway matched a season high with 30 as the Orlando Magic erased an 11-point half-time deficit and stormed to an 81-72 victory over the Knicks.

The Magic swept the three-game season series from the Knicks and extended their lead atop the Eastern Conference to two games over Indiana. They also retained their three-game lead atop the Atlantic Division over Miami.

Patrick Ewing scored 28 points for New York, which performed yet another disappearing act in the fourth quarter and has lost six of its last nine games.

In Portland, Walt Williams, Isaiah Rider and Rasheed Wallace scored 15 points apiece as the Trail Blazers won their eighth straight game at home, 98-89 over the lowly Vancouver Grizzlies.

Houston pulled within one-half game of idle second-place San Antonio in the Midwest Division. The Rockets host the Spurs on Thursday before visiting first-place Utah on Sunday.

In Los Angeles, the ejection of coach Danny Ainge in the third quarter ignited the Phoenix Suns, as Jason Kidd overcame a 10-turnover night by scoring 15 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter of an 88-83 victory over the Clippers.

Prince Faisal underlines Kingdom's support for 1st Arab Paralympics

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — Officials from the Arab Paralympics Federation (APF) Wednesday expressed their appreciation to Jordanian authorities for offering their support and hosting the 1st Arab Paralympics which will be held Sept. 9-20 following the 9th Pan-Arab Games.

The APF Vice-President Hasan Ben Ali and Secretary Hasan Suweidi made their comments after meeting HRH Prince Faisal, the president of the Higher Organising Committee (HOC) and HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd director of the Paralympics.

Prince Faisal underlined Jordan's support for holding the first Arab Paralympics in which 13 countries will participate: Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Syria and Jordan.

The events on schedule are basketball, weightlifting, athletics, table tennis for the physically handicapped, athletics and target ball for the blind, athletics for the mentally handicapped and football for the hearing impaired.

The Paralympics is expected to cost around JD300,000 to prepare the Kingdom's 10 national teams for competition.

Prince Faisal recently expressed his satisfaction with the preparations for the Aug. 15-31 9th Pan-Arab Games and said he expected an overall successful event.

The Prince expressed hope that all Arab countries would take part in the event, urging Jordanian officials and athletes to exert all efforts to attain the best results and make the Games worthy of carrying the name

Al Hussein Tournament in memory of King Hussein who passed away on Feb. 7 after a long battle with cancer.

Around 50 venues at schools and universities have been designated as competition and training sites while construction of various venues is on schedule and expected to be completed in June.

Those include the JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, the Olympic-size swimming pool, and maintenance work on the track and field stadium at Al Hussein Youth City.

Minister of Youth and Sport Mohammad Kheir Mamsar this week set April 25 as the final day for submitting tenders to buy equipment for the Games since apart from gymnastics, no equipment has been ordered from abroad yet.

The Japanese and Chinese governments have expressed willingness to supply equipment as Jordan seeks to upgrade facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements.

Over 4,000 athletes and officials are expected to converge for the last Arab Games of the century. For the first time the schedule will include 27 of 62 Olympic events (compared to 19 events in 20 sports at the 1997 Beirut Games).

With the recent mobilisation of efforts to make sure that work on construction and procurement of equipment moves at a faster pace the main pressing issue on the agenda of Al Hussein Tournament is the competitive level of the Kingdom's teams.

Officials at the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) expressed concern that a host of administrative and organisational issues seem to

have overshadowed the lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes — a key priority as host country.

Officials do not want a repeat of the scenario of the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, the last regional event Jordan took part, where Jordan only managed five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.

The 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut witnessed the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals.

Jordan's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together in which they gained a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

Nineteen countries are confirmed for the Amman Games: They are in addition to the host, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, Oman and Lebanon. Somalia, Bahrain, and the UAE.

The only Arab countries still not confirmed are Mauritania, Djibouti and the Comoros Islands.

Rehearsals for the opening programme have started and involve over 7,000 students from various schools.

A French expert who was in charge of opening and closing ceremonies during the 1998 World Cup has been contracted to provide expertise at a cost of JD250,000.

Jordan has had to bear a heavy financial burden because the Kingdom has had to prepare the Games in less than 20 months after the decision to move the Games back to 1999 instead of 2001 so as not to coincide with the Mediterranean Games.

The Games are estimated to cost around \$30 million of which the government has paid \$10 million and the JOC has provided \$4 million.

So far, there has been no direct aid to help the Kingdom apart from \$500,000 in sponsorship from the Council of Arab Sports Ministers while UAE TV announced that it will lend Jordan Television the necessary equipment to cover the event after it was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire its own equipment.

Around JD3.5 million was expected in revenue (including \$1.5 million from TV coverage). Based on the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF, Jordan will receive \$1.5 million in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Additional sponsorship was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent Arab Sports Federation margin of profit on promotion and television coverage amounting to \$750,000.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last summer, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sports facilities destroyed during the civil war.

SCOREBOARD

UEFA Cup semi-final	
At Marseille, France	Bologna (Ita) 0
Marseille (Fra) 0	
At Madrid, Spain	Parma (Ita) 3
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 1	
English Premiership	
Arsenal 1	Blackburn Rov. 0
Leicester City 2	Aston Villa 2
Dutch First Division	
Cambuur Leeuwarden 1	RJC Kerkrade 1
American League	
Minnesota 6	Toronto 1
Texas 6	Detroit 0
Anaheim 6	Cleveland 5
NY Yankees 7	Oakland 4
White Sox 11	Seattle 3
National League	
San Diego 4	Colorado 3
San Francisco 7	Cincinnati 6
NY Mets 12	Florida 3
Pittsburgh 8	Montreal 2
Atlanta 11	Philadelphia 3
Houston 4	Chicago Cubs 2
Los Angeles 3	Arizona 2
NBA	
Philadelphia 95	Milwaukee 87
Miami 92	Toronto 70
Cleveland 96	Chicago 89
Orlando 81	New York 72
New Jersey 97	Washington 93
Houston 111	Golden State 74
Portland 98	Vancouver 89
Sacramento 112	Seattle 106
Phoenix 88	LA Clippers 83
LA Lakers 106	Utah 93

Seles on U.S. Fed Cup team

WHITE PLAINS (AFP) — Monica Seles, Chanda Rubin and Lisa Raymond will join Lindsay Davenport on the U.S. Fed Cup team that will host Croatia April 17-18, captain Billie Jean King announced Tuesday.

Originally scheduled to take place in Zagreb, Croatia, the first-round tie was moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, because of the ongoing military conflict in Kosovo.

Seles, a naturalized American who was born and raised in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, was not expected to play if the tie had been held in Croatia.

She has gone undefeated in eight Fed Cup matches.

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE AT MOUNT NEBO

Sunday 11 April 1999 at 6 a.m.
The service (in English) is organised by the Anglican Jordan Chaplaincy
Enquiries:
465 6195 OR 592 7292 OR 551 4771
All are most welcome
Bring a picnic breakfast for after the service!

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30% wishes you a Happy Easter & offers you a 30% discount
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SACRED HEART PARISH (Roman Catholic)
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE HOLY WEEK SERVICES IN AMMAN
Rev. Dr. Kevin G. O'Connell, S.J., Pastor — Phone: 461-4190
Holy Thursday (8 April 1999)
5:00 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper — De La Salle Church*
Good Friday (9 April 1999)
3:00 p.m. Passion Service and Holy Communion — De La Salle Church*
Holy Saturday (10 April 1999)
10:00 p.m. Easter Vigil Service and Mass of the Resurrection — De La Salle Church*
* All at: Frères College, Razi Street, Jabal Hussein
Easter Sunday (11 April 1999) — Mass of the Resurrection
11:00 a.m. St. Joseph Church (First Circle, Jabal Amman)
12:30 p.m. Church of the Annunciation (Jabal Al-Weibdeh)
6:00 p.m. De La Salle Church (Frères College, Razi Street, Jabal Hussein)

Happy Easter
Easter Sunday Lunch
11 April, 1999 at 1:00pm
Enjoy Easter lunch with us. Our Executive Chef Francois Dury will prepare a wide selection of hot and cold delicacies including:
Salmon Medallion
Fillet of Beef Wellington
Chicken Florida
Quails with White Grapes
Seafood Calypso
and much much more.
We are looking forward to celebrating Easter with you, your family and friends.
Price: JD 15++ per person
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HOTEL AMMAN
The difference is genuine.
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There's a basketful of ideas for the whole family this Easter at the Grand Hyatt Amman
Celebrate Easter with us this Sunday, April 11th at the Grand Café.
Parents can relax and enjoy the exquisite buffet, while we entertain your children with face painting, egg art, and video corner.
Adults JD 12,500++
50% for kids between 6-12 years old
Reserve your table now by calling 465-1234
Feel the Hyatt touch
T H E GRAND CAFE

Libya wants U.S. oil firms to return, minister says

TUNIS (R) — Libya's Energy Minister Abdullah Salem Badri wasted no time on Wednesday in inviting U.S. oil firms to return to Libya two days after U.N. sanctions were suspended.

"We invite U.S. firms which were our associates in the past to return to the Jamahiriya [Libya] and continue production," Badri told Reuters in a telephone interview from Tunis.

"Our doors are open to talk with them and to facilitate their operations and their return to Libya," he added.

But unilateral U.S. sanctions dating back to the 1980s mean U.S. firms are unlikely to return to Libya any time soon, and it is European firms which filled the gap left by the Americans then who are likely to benefit from the easing of sanctions.

U.S. oil companies Exxon and Mobil withdrew from Libya in 1982, a year after the United States imposed a trade embargo on Libya.

Five other companies, Amerasia Hess, Conoco, Grace Petroleum, Marathon, and Occidental, remained in Libya until 1986, when President Ronald Reagan ordered them to cease activities there.

U.N. sanctions imposed in 1992 were suspended on Monday after Libya handed over two men suspected in the

bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

The U.S. State Department said that even though Libya had turned over the suspects for trial by a Scottish court in the Netherlands, Washington would not remove its own sanctions yet.

"We need to have additional concerns alleviated [by Libya] before we will address modifying sanctions," State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters in Washington.

Another deterrent is the U.S. Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996, which penalises any company investing in the energy sectors of Iran and Libya.

"This law is not respected," Badri said, referring to deals concluded recently between European oil firms and Iran.

Badri, describing Libya as "a virgin for exploration," said he was ready to negotiate both with European companies and U.S. companies not previously involved in Libya.

"Libya is an important state in terms of its oil reserves and production, and a market which is very close to Europe and the European oil firms. We invite these [European] firms to enter much more [in Libya]," Badri said.

Badri said an international oil conference would be held in Geneva on April 19-20 on

opportunities for investing in Libya.

Several European oil companies, including Italian, French, German, Spanish and Austrian firms, are active in Libyan oil exploration and production, accounting for a third of Libya's oil output of 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd).

Oil exports account for about 95 per cent of Libya's hard currency earnings. The country has 12 oilfields with reserves of one billion barrels of crude or more, and two others with reserves of 500 million to one billion barrels.

Badri said Libya was complying fully with output cuts agreed by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries last month. Libya pledged to cut 96,000 bpd from April 1.

Foreign experts have said the U.N. sanctions, coupled with the U.S. embargo, delayed a number of field developments and oil recovery projects. Production from some Libyan fields has been in decline because of a lack of spare parts.

"The suspension of U.N. sanctions will enable swift and easier acquisition of equipment and spare parts," Badri said.

He added that the end of an air ban would make it easier for the estimated 3,000 foreign oil workers to travel in and out of Libya while reducing costs for their companies.



RWANDA GENOCIDE REMEMBERED: Swedish members of Doctors without Borders play drums on Wednesday in central Stockholm. They will keep on drumming for 100 hours to mark the fifth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. They are also drumming against the present situation in Kosovo (AP photo)

U.N. council starts talks on Iraq policy

UNITED NATIONS (R) — With scant signs of unity, the 15-member U.N. Security Council on Wednesday began discussions on its deadlocked policy on disarmament and sanctions in Iraq.

In an effort to break a political logjam, the council in early February set up three panels — on weapons, humanitarian issues and compensation for Kuwaiti war victims, all chaired by Brazil's U.N. ambassador, Celso L.N. Amorim.

Amorim introduced the panel reports, distributed to members late last month. Initial closed-door council discussions are scheduled for this week and two days next week, envoys said.

But Amorim predicted discussions "could take weeks if you are looking for a more long-term solution."

With the Iraqi economy deteriorating rapidly after nearly nine years of U.N. sanctions, France, Russia and China want relief as soon as possible while the United States and Britain

blame the misery mainly on President Saddam Hussein's refusal to relinquish his weapons of mass destruction.

Peter Burleigh, the chief U.S. delegate, said Washington was still "definitely" opposed to lifting sanctions, adding the panels made "it clear that Iraq has not disarmed," one requirement for lifting the embargoes.

The panel on disarmament concluded most but not all of Iraq's dangerous weapons had been destroyed. The humanitarian panel suggested sanctions be eased and private investment be allowed in Baghdad's oil industry and other fields.

Missing from the discussion, however, is Iraq itself, which insists it has no more prohibited weapons and that all sanctions must be lifted immediately.

"It's Iraq's right not to accept less than a total and comprehensive lifting of sanctions," said the newspaper Al Thawra, organ of the ruling Baath Party, on Friday.

There also is no sign Iraq is

willing to cooperate with arms inspectors even if there were some relief from sanctions, imposed after Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"I hope after discussions in the council it will be possible to engage Iraq in a more positive way," Amorim said.

The report on disarmament from a panel of 20 experts and government officials called for continued inspections as well as a restructured U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on lines Russia suggested to the council in January.

UNSCOM's weapons inspectors have not been in Iraq since the mid-December bombing raids by the United States and Britain.

The report concluded that the bulk of Iraq's dangerous weapons had been destroyed. But it said Baghdad still was unwilling to reveal weapons information, particularly on chemical and biological arms, thereby requiring inspections. The humanitarian affairs panel, consisting of four senior

U.N. officials, recommended an easing of sanctions in a series of measures, many of which the United States opposes.

One was that oil companies be allowed to invest directly in Iraq and lend it spare parts for its dilapidated oil industry that exports about 2.5 million barrels of crude a day. The panel also called for private investments in other export industries such as fertilizer, sulphur, urea, dates and nuts.

The panel concluded that Iraq has since 1990 "experienced a shift from relative affluence to massive poverty." Infant mortality is the highest in the world, and chronic malnutrition affects every fourth child under five.

Iraq since December 1996 has been subject to a U.N. "oil-for-food" programme under which it can now sell up to \$5.256 billion worth of oil every six months in order to pay for basic goods. But due to falling oil prices and the state of its industry, it has hardly managed \$3 billion.



Say it with flowers

ROTHERHAM (AFP) — A gang of thieves who were ordered to plant daffodil bulbs as part of their community service have seen their revenge flourish this spring. The group were told to plant hundreds of bulbs along one of the main roads in Rotherham, in northern England, last autumn. But when the bulbs sprouted this week, the thieves spelled out the words "Bottles" and "Shag" in letters 1.3 metres wide. Residents living on East Bawtry Road, which carries thousands of visitors a day, said people were coming from miles around to take a look at the flowers. One Alan McCue, 48, said: "I can see the funny side, but it doesn't really create a good impression of the town. They planted hundreds of bulbs so we're all a bit worried about what might come up next."

Husband's earning leads to divorce

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian woman who was mortified because her 35-year-old husband were earnings filed for divorce and won court officials said. A Cairo court ruled that "the wife was greatly affected by this behaviour which violates Sharia and national traditions," they said. The couple was married five years ago and have a child but their life became hell when the husband showed up one day earlier this year wearing earrings and refused to take them off. The woman, a civil servant who was not identified, urged her husband to remove the jewellery pleading with him that it was unacceptable in Egyptian society — where men wearing earrings are taken to be homosexual.

NYC cops get etiquette lessons

NEW YORK (AP) — "Hello, ma'am. Drop the gun, please." New York City police are getting a manners lesson from Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who wants the nearly 40,000 police officers to be a little more civil, professional and courteous. "Police officers are going to be required to refer to people in a respectful way," Giuliani said Tuesday. "They will be required to refer to people as 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir' and 'yes, ma'am' and 'no, ma'am.' And they will be required to explain the nature of their conduct when they make a mistake." Last they forget all of this in a city that prides itself on being brusque, officers will have wallet-size cards listing the common courtesies.

Competitors call truce after 40 days on roller coaster

SYDNEY (AP) — After riding a roller-coaster every day for the past five weeks, the last two contestants in a competition called it quits Wednesday and split the prize money. Steve Fletcher and Rosa Vaccaro ended their 40-day ride by calling a stalemate in the competition and collecting Australian dollars 10,000 (\$6,300) each. The two spent more than five weeks riding the Bush Beast roller-coaster at the Wonderland Amusement Park near Sydney as part of a radio station promotion. Fletcher said the contest would not stop him from taking his children on fair rides at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney this week.

Old computers get new lease of life

BOSTON (AP) — Tired of keeping up on the information superhighway? Not to worry, old computers may soon be part of the highway — as pothole filler. The state department of environmental protection has joined forces with the American Plastics Council to promote the recycling and marketing of plastics from electronics. "We want people to take those computers out of the attic, get them out of the landfills and make use of the good parts," said Rick Lombardi, spokesman for the department. "And God knows, we have plenty of potholes to fill in New England."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish airliner crash kills six

ANKARA (AFP) — An airliner operated by the state-run Turkish Airlines (THY) crashed in the southern Anatolian province of Adana early on Wednesday, killing its six-member crew, Turkish media said. The plane, a Boeing 737-400, was not carrying any passengers as it had taken off from Adana en route to Jeddah to bring back Turkish pilgrims on the Hajj. A senior THY official, Faik Akin, said that the plane disappeared from radar five minutes after it took off from Adana airport shortly after midnight. It crashed into an agricultural field near a small village in Adana's Ceyhan town, some 40 kilometres away from the airport. None of the crew, which included two pilots, survived. The reason for the crash was not immediately known.

Iraqi executions a 'farce' — opposition

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Iraq's execution of four men over the killing of a top Shiite cleric was carried out purely for show, the Iraqi opposition said on Wednesday, noting that one of the men was in jail at the time of the murder. "Sheikh Abdul Hasan Abbas Kufi, shown on television as one of the assassins, was in prison at the time," the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI) said in a statement in Damascus. It said leading Shiite cleric Sheikh Mohammad Sadek Al Sadr, gunned down on Feb. 19, had even called for Kufi's release a week before he was killed. "It's an Iraqi intelligence farce," the leading Iraqi opposition group said. It added that Ahmad Mustapha Ardashir, another of the four executed for Sadr's murder, was "a known member of the Iraqi regime."

New defence named in Yemen trial

ADEN (R) — A Yemeni court trying 10 suspected Islamist militants on terrorism charges appointed a new defence team on Wednesday after the defendants' lawyers failed to appear at a hearing. Witnesses said seven lawyers representing the defendants — eight Britons of Arab or Pakistani origin and two of Algerian origin — had withdrawn from the case last month to protest against what they called unjust proceedings. The lawyers boycotted Monday's session and the court had said a new defence team would be appointed if they failed to appear on Wednesday. The witnesses said the defendants had rejected the court-appointed defence team and insisted they be represented by their own lawyers. The court said the lawyers would be allowed to appear in court if they submitted a new request. The court adjourned until April 14.

Sweden files complaint against mission

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Sweden's foreign ministry has taken the unusual step of lodging a formal complaint with police here against its embassy in Tehran over allegations of bribery, ministry officials confirmed on Wednesday. This followed reports in the daily paper Dagens Nyheter that personnel at the embassy in Iran had taken bribes in return for delivering Swedish visas and residence permits. It said there had also been attempts to bribe the Swedish immigration office's representative in Tehran by people trying to get into Sweden. There was no immediate word on whom the complaints were against among the seven diplomatic staff and 15 local Iranian employees.

Turkish police detain three with bombs

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish police on Wednesday detained three suspected Kurdish rebels with explosives at the Ipsala border post with Greece, Anadolu news agency reported. The suspects, one of them a pregnant woman, were travelling in a foreign-registered car with three powerful time-bombs concealed in the back of the vehicle, the report said. It said the three were believed to be members of the outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK). They told police that they had obtained the bombs in Germany before setting out for Turkey.

Saudi car crash kills 12

RIYADH (AFP) — Twelve people were killed, eight of them women, in a car crash near Mecca, the home of Islam's holiest sites, a Saudi newspaper said on Wednesday. The Okaz paper said the accident occurred on Monday when a four-wheel drive vehicle driven by a Saudi collided with a car coming from Mecca. It did not give the nationalities of the other victims. An adviser to the Saudi transport minister said the accident rate on the kingdom's roads was "the highest in the world" and that speeding was the main cause. "Every hour, one person is killed and four others injured," Ali Ben Said Al Ghamdi told Al Madina newspaper.

Turk troops pursue PKK rebels in north Iraq

ANKARA (AFP) — Thousands of Turkish troops, backed by air cover, have crossed into northern Iraq to crack down on separatist Kurdish rebels fighting the Ankara government, Turkish press reports said on Wednesday.

Some 15,000 troops, accompanied by 2,000 Kurdish village guards loyal to the state, poured into the Kurdish enclave from Uludere town in southeastern Turkey on Tuesday morning, the reports said.

They are said to have penetrated some 15 kilometres into the area.

The cross-border operation was launched after Turkish fighter jets pounded rebel camps in Sinith and Pirbela for two hours, the reports said.

Fighters of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), a close ally of Ankara controlling the area along Turkey's border with Iraq, were providing support to Turkish soldiers, they added.

Clashes between the soldiers and Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels were reported in the area, but there was no information on casualties, the papers said.

Military officials were not available for comment.

The Turkish army has crossed into northern Iraq several times in its struggle with the PKK which has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy on Turkish territory since 1984.

Turkey believes that the power vacuum in northern Iraq, which has been outside Baghdad's control since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, facilitates Kurdish rebel attacks on its territory.

Iranian authorities confiscate newspaper

TEHRAN (AP) — Authorities confiscated Wednesday's issue of a moderate newspaper to prevent it from defying a ban, imposed after the daily printed a cartoon deemed insulting to Islam, its editor said.

Court officials, citing the cartoon as well as a letter the paper published from Iran's former Empress Farah Diba, said the moderate Zan newspaper will be banned from publishing until after the case goes to court. A trial date was not released.

Editors at Zan, which means woman, had vowed to publish Wednesday despite the ban.

But Zan editor Faraj Balafkan said Wednesday that the pages were ready for printing when they were confiscated by authorities.

The paper was banned after printing a cartoon Tuesday showing a man being asked to kill a woman rather than a man because under Islamic law a woman's "blood money" is half that of a man's.

Blood money is compensation that must be paid to the family of a victim who is murdered or killed in an accident.

Gholamhossein Rahbarpour, head of Iran's revolutionary

court, said Wednesday that the ban would remain in force until the paper's owner, Faezeh Hashemi, is brought to court.

He said the mere publication of the former empress's greetings to the Iranian people on the Iranian new year's was "a blatant anti-revolutionary act and considered publicly for the vicious [monarchical] regime," the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Also, the paper had insulted Islam by publishing a cartoon that ridiculed blood money — "one of the main judicial and religious principles of Islam," Rahbarpour said.

Zan identified Farah Diba, the widow of the Shah who was ousted during the 1979 Islamic revolution, only by her name.

Iranian newspapers generally add insulting epithets when they refer to the shah or his relatives.

Zan is a staunch supporter of moderate President Mohammad Khatami, and Hashemi, a member of parliament and the daughter of moderate former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, is a top advocate for women's rights.

U.N. expert says torture in Turkey on the decrease

GENEVA (AP) — Torture in Turkey has decreased "notably" over the last two years, a U.N. expert on torture and ill-treatment said in a report issued Wednesday.

But there were still many instances of prisoners being tortured, Nigel Rodley said.

Rodley, in a report to the U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva this month, said torture was practised systematically in Turkey until the middle of the 1990s, but there had now been improvements.

The reduction of detention periods, restricting the amount of time to inflict torture and for the visible signs of ill-treatment to heal, was largely respon-

sible for the decrease in ill-treatment, he said.

Rodley said that there had also been a substantial reduction in the brutality of the methods used in some places. Allegations of falaka, the beating of the soles of the feet, Palestinian hanging, the body suspended by the hands behind the back, electric shocks and rape had abated substantially.

On the other hand, other forms of torture were still rife in some parts of the country, he said.

Among these were blindfolding, high pressure hosing with cold water, straight hanging — suspension by the raised arms from a crossbar — squeezing the testicles, sexual abuses and

threats.

There was also an increase in the number of cases of people being abducted and tortured without being brought into custody, and the torture of street children charged with stealing.

Rodley said the continuing problems could not be attributed to a formal policy of the government and he believed the government wanted to achieve international standards of law enforcement.

Instead he said it was "a pervasive technique of law enforcement agencies for the purpose of investigation, securing confessions and intimidation."

The 43-page document by the

British former director of Amnesty International was compiled during a visit to Turkey in November 1998. This included a visit to the Kurdish town of Diyarbakir. Kurds claim they are mistreated and repressed by the Turkish government.

Rodley recommended that the Turkish government amend its laws to make sure everyone in custody received prompt access to a lawyer and be quickly brought before a judge. All allegations of torture should be thoroughly investigated, he said.

He also asked the government to consider allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross to set up an office in the country.